

THE ART OF
THOR





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THE ART OF
THOR[®]

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FOREWORD: OF ART, INSPIRATION AND THE GODS...

In June 1962, the 83rd issue of the Marvel comic book *Journey into Mystery* hit stands and introduced a new character into the then-nascent Marvel Universe. In a story written by Stan Lee and penciled by Jack Kirby, a lame physician named Donald Blake, traveling in Norway, discovered a magic stick. When he struck it against the ground, he was surrounded by a burst of energy and instantly transformed into the incarnation of the Norse God of Thunder, the Mighty Thor. A principal figure in the myths of the Vikings, Thor was both a great warrior and a protector of mankind.

In the beginning, the magical transformation from Blake to Thor seemed mostly a bit of comic-book legerdemain that enabled a rather frail human to become a powerful super hero who could defend the peace and safety of ordinary mortals against the menace of any number of super villains. However, within a few issues, stories from the Norse myths began to grace the comic. Loki, Thor's evil stepbrother, was introduced. Asgard, the home of the Norse gods, made an appearance — as did Thor's father, Odin. The gradual emergence of the myths in the comic separated the book from other super-hero fare of the time, giving Thor's adventures an increasingly epic scope.

In concert with that increasing scope, the stories became a visual feast. With seeming ease, Kirby visualized the world of the gods. He gave the Asgardians a culture of elaborate armor and weaponry, and a soaring city in which to live. He designed an endlessly inventive array of foes against whom Thor constantly had to measure himself. Some, such as the race of Trolls, were distorted images of the gods themselves. Others, like the Colonizers of Rigel and the High Evolutionary, could just as easily have stepped out of an old science-fiction pulp magazine.

I discovered the original stories of the Norse gods and the Nine Worlds of the Vikings as a child, and I loved them. As a reader of comics while in college, I delighted in those new tales of Thor and Asgard. In those stories, I found a sense of scale and grandeur that enlarged the adventures far beyond the confines of an ordinary comic book.

By the time Kirby departed from the title some 70 issues later, he had fashioned the world of the gods into a rich tapestry of visual fantasy. He set a high bar for every artist who followed him on the title. There were wonderful artists after Jack, but he remains the watershed visionary for Thor. During my own time as the writer and artist on the book, some 20 years later, I was hugely influenced by his work. I was inspired to emulate it in some places and to veer away from it in others. But always, I strove to draw my pictures large, to fashion a stage for the gods to play on worthy of their powers and their ambitions.

Now, more than 20 years after I worked on the title myself, I have been lucky enough to visit the sets and see a little of the filming of the new Thor movie, to meet many of its cast and crew, and to watch the birthing of a new vision of the realm of Asgard and the Nine Worlds. There are many elements of the comics still present; there are also entirely new designs and concepts being introduced for the first time.

Two things in particular struck me during my time on set. The first is that for all the disparate elements that have to come together to make the film, a concentrated effort is being made — by Director Kenneth Branagh and everyone I met — to forge a tale on a heroic scale. Thor and his world are being writ large. I have seen Odin's great throne, sat in the shining mead hall of Asgard at the banquet table, stood in Heimdall's Observatory and walked the snowfields of Jotunheim. And second, I have rarely met so many people in one place who were so happy to be working on a project together. The cast seemed to take delight in being the perfect embodiments of their roles in their elaborate armor and weaponry, and the crew seemed completely engaged in the task of fashioning the magic that will create Asgard and encompass the audience within its limitless horizons.

And my thought was, what better place to create a story of Thor and his world than in film, now more than ever a medium capable of rendering epic adventures scaled to the size of the gods and their great enemies.

Walter Simonson

New York

January 2011

INTRODUCTION:

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

Stan Lee needed something timeless. And even in 1962 — when comic books were still mainly children's fare, and fresh ideas seemed to hover in the air, waiting for writers and artists to pin them down to a fresh sheet of Bristol board — that was no easy task. Just a young comic-book writer himself, Lee had already done the unthinkable and introduced two of comicdom's most iconic and popular characters, breathing new life into the fledgling Marvel Universe. During the previous year, Lee had teamed with legendary artist Jack "King" Kirby to introduce America's first family of super heroes, the Fantastic Four, as well as the gamma-powered behemoth in purple pants known as the Hulk. And while Marvel Comics was enjoying a healthy growth in sales and popularity, Lee was left worrying how to top himself.

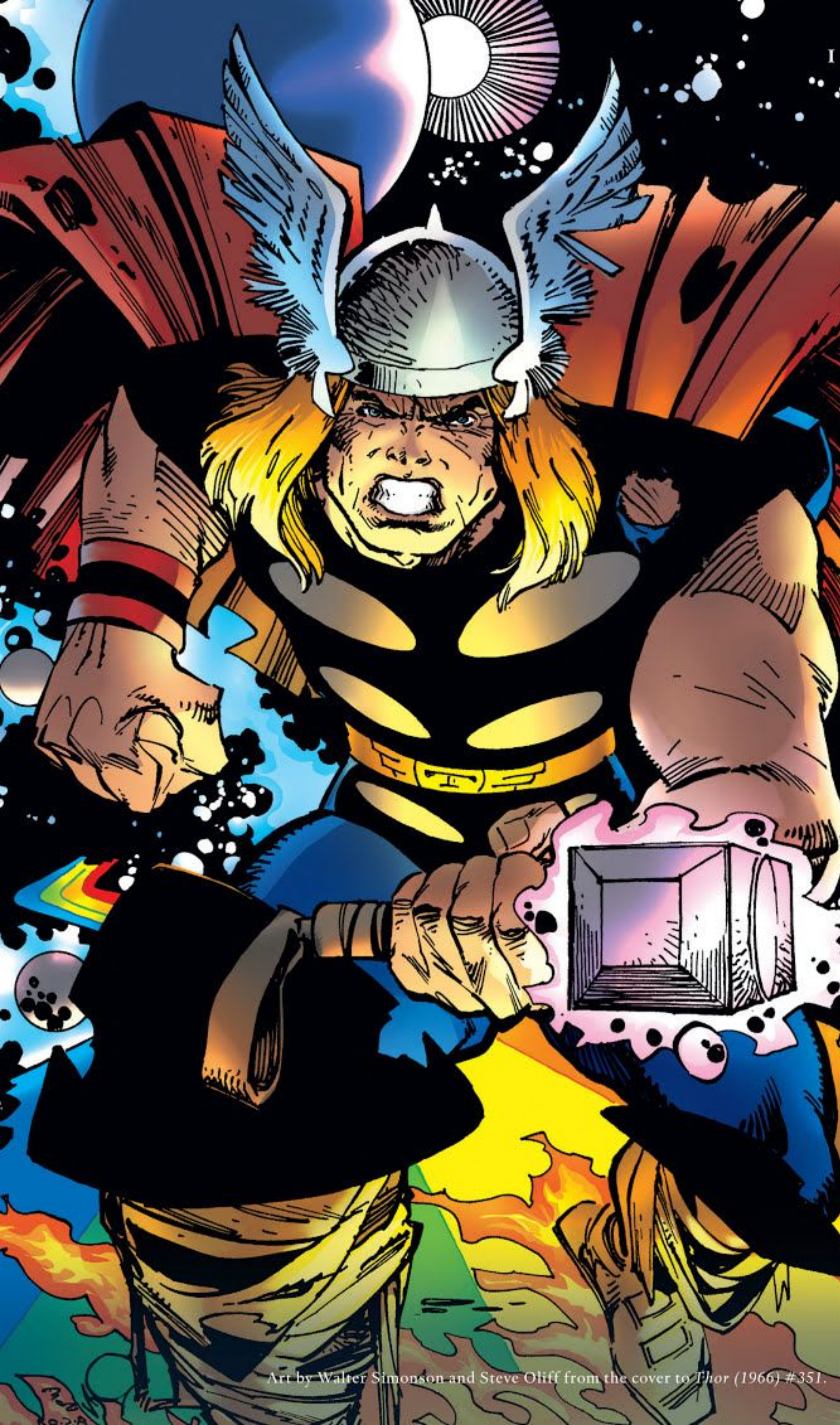
In retrospect, the answer seems all too easy. Lee and Kirby were giving rise to legends, modern heroic figures with larger-than-life attributes who would go on to capture the imagination of many generations. Whether they were aware of it at the time, what they were in fact doing was building America's modern mythology. They were taking age-old archetypes and putting them in contemporary settings against contemporary challenges. After all, the process of myth is akin to a snowball rolling down a mountain. It begins as a single story, and then gradually builds in size as it descends, picking up a new villain here or a new quest there, until it grows to avalanche proportions. Mythology is a story that's been altered, fine-tuned and passed down by countless storytellers, always constantly borrowing from what came before. So appropriately enough, all Stan Lee needed to do was look to the legends of the past.

It didn't take long for Stan to settle on the idea of a god. He had already crafted powerful characters like the Thing and the Hulk, and the audience's response was overwhelmingly positive to these beings with near earth-shattering abilities. The power of a god seemed like the next natural step. The only question that remained was which god?

As Lee recalls, "I thought let's see, we could do Mars, we could do Jupiter, but somehow I thought to myself, the Norse gods. People don't know much



Art by Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott from the cover to *Journey into Mystery* #83.



Art by Walter Simonson and Steve Oliff from the cover to *Thor* (1966) #351.

INTRODUCTION : JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

about them as they do about the Greek and Roman. It would be fun to do a Norse god.” After that, the choice was obvious. “And Thor just sounded so dramatic. Thor, with his mighty hammer. And I love adjectives so I called the thing The Mighty Thor.” Stan Lee had discovered his newest hero. Now, he just had to find a way to introduce him to the rest of the world.

Under one of the most interesting publishing programs in the medium’s history, Marvel Comics in 1962 were distributed only by the graces of its chief rival, DC Comics. And in accordance with this agreement, Marvel was limited to producing eight titles a month. So while Lee had sown the seeds for a classic Marvel icon, he didn’t have the wiggle room to give Thor his own self-titled comic series. The solution was to tweak one of Marvel’s pre-existing “monster” titles to serve as a showcase for Thor’s adventures. After all, Lee had realized that with the success of the Fantastic Four and DC Comics’ Justice League of America, super heroes were finally returning to the spotlight in the industry they’d first made popular. Westerns, romances, war and monster-themed comics were going the way of the dodo to make room for the brightly clad resurgence of the crime-fighting genre. So with *Journey into Mystery* #83, Thor nabbed the lead 13-page feature.

As he made room on Marvel’s schedule for the debut of the Golden God, Stan Lee quickly realized there wasn’t enough room in his own personal schedule to chronicle Thor’s adventures. Already plotting and dialoging several other comics — including his new pet project with artist Steve Ditko about a hero named Spider-Man — Lee decided to pass on the writing chores of Thor to his brother, Larry Lieber. An inventive writer in his own right who later helped develop Iron Man, Lieber devised Thor’s secret identity, Dr. Donald Blake, as he crafted the script for the Thunder God’s initial adventure. Discovering Thor’s hammer in a remote cavern, Blake could change at the proverbial speed of lightning from his frail human form into the mighty visage of Thor.

With Lieber on board to flesh out Lee’s original plot, Stan added

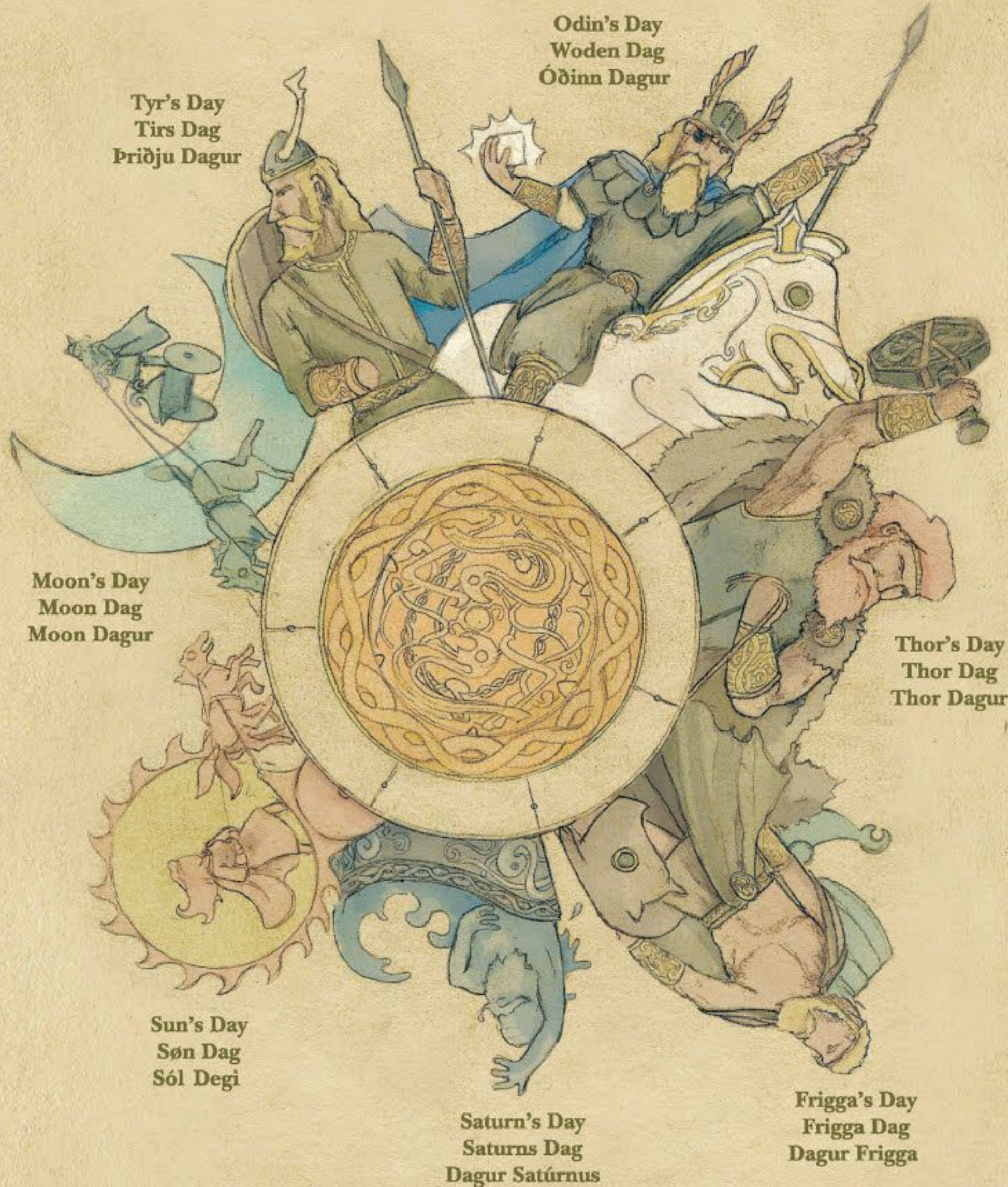
perhaps the most important part of the puzzle: artist Jack Kirby. Kirby's dynamic layouts and energetic storytelling gave Thor the sense of power and might Lee had envisioned for the character. And while *Journey into Mystery* proved a moderate success at the time, Kirby settled into the work by the mid-1960s and began to craft some of the most impressive artwork of his career. Thor soon became one of the most recognizable faces in Marvel's pantheon.

And the myth of Thor grew. His father, Odin, became a major character in his adventures, as did his trickster half-brother, Loki. In fact, it was the machinations of this rival sibling that led Thor on a landmark adventure that marked the formation of Marvel's next great super-hero team, the Avengers. Thor was fighting alongside other larger-than-life heroes, including the Hulk, Ant-Man, the Wasp, Iron Man and soon even World War II icon Captain America.

As the snowball that was Thor continued to tumble down the mountain, *Journey into Mystery* was renamed *Thor* at issue #126, giving the hero even more of a spotlight. His battles became more epic in scope, focusing on the cosmic arena and greater and greater threats. Legendary talent like artists John Buscema, Don Heck and Dick Ayers, as well as writers Gerry Conway and Roy Thomas, all added their interpretations of the Golden God to the collective tale. And while many other important writers and artists helped chronicle Thor's adventures, it wasn't until Walter Simonson took up both the writing and artistic chores on the title in 1983 that the book truly took off to new heights. Appropriately enough, Simonson achieved this goal by digging back down into Thor's roots.



Art by John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson from the cover to *Thor* (1998) #1.



A longtime fan of Norse mythology, Simonson jumped at the chance to chart Thor's adventures, transforming a title with sagging sales into a reimaged success. He spun epic tales of the villainous Surtur, and of Thor's allies Balder the Brave and the Warriors Three. He granted Thor the new secret identity of Sigurd Jarlson and even replaced the hero for a time with the horse-faced alien Beta Ray Bill. Asgard was explored and expanded upon, as were other elements of traditional Norse mythology. And every page was delivered in Simonson's powerful, energetic style, restoring Thor to his former glory.



Meanwhile, a world had been forming. The Marvel Universe had expanded out of simple crossover adventures between allied heroes into a fully realized dimension all its own. Thanks to the tight sense of continuity Stan Lee employed in the 1960s, heroes were constantly bumping into one another on the crowded streets of New York. Characters often guest-starred in other unfamiliar titles to grab the attention of new readers, and a grand pantheon of heroes and villains had emerged on the scene. And propelled by comic-book stars including Tom DeFalco, Ron Frenz, Dan Jurgens, John Romita Jr., and recently, J. Michael Straczynski and Olivier Coipel, Thor's well-earned



Art by Olivier Coipel, Mark Morales and Laura Martin from the cover to *Thor* (2007) #1.

place among the mightiest of those heroes in the Avengers would only add to his legend. His image became a part of American pop culture, finding its way on to action figures, T-shirts and even into the movie *Adventures in Babysitting*. Dozens of writers and artists helped chart new paths for the hero as he participated in company-wide crossovers, reality-altering events and titanic interplanetary conflicts. Marvel Comics had secured itself as arguably the top comic book producer in America, and Thor's name had become synonymous with Marvel.

Although comic books don't sell as many copies today as they did in 1962 when Stan Lee pulled Thor out of the relatively obscure world of Norse mythology, their impact on our society is every bit as strong, if not stronger. Never have these formerly four-color magazines branched

out into so many facets of modern day living. From toothbrushes to video games to blockbuster movie franchises, comics are a daily part of Americana, and their title characters are embraced with as much enthusiasm today as many generations past thrilled to the exploits of Hercules or Achilles. Comic books and their cinematic progeny are our morality tales, our lessons of humility and heroism.

And now, with Thor's feature-film debut, the mainstream can once again thrill to the adventures of a reborn Norse legend. A little bit of timelessness, plucked from the air yet again.

CHAPTER ONE:

FORGING A HERO

It all started with *Iron Man*. As Marvel Studios' premiere venture, the ambitious film sought to demonstrate to audiences the world over how to make a movie the Marvel way. Sure there had been successful films starring Marvel heroes in the past, but *Iron Man* was the first to be completely piloted by Marvel, and the results were astounding. Not only a huge commercial hit, *Iron Man* also paved the way for the shared cinematic universe of Marvel properties, each closely linked to the other, much in the way Stan Lee had crafted his legendary comics back in the so-called Silver Age of that industry.

After the individual successes of *Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk* and *Iron Man 2*, the release of a Thor movie was never in doubt. As a founding member of the Avengers, Thor was the next logical choice for cinematic stardom. The only question became how exactly to meld the fantastic realm of the Thunder God with the realistic universe depicted in both *Iron Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*. "Thor begins in the most distant part of our universe," said comic-book writer and Producer Craig Kyle. "It needs to make sense in Tony's world in *Iron Man*. They need to be able to sit on the couch in Avengers and talk about the universe and both be right."

One way of bridging that disconnect was bringing Director Kenneth Branagh on board the project. Said Marvel Studios President and *Thor* Producer Kevin Feige, "What you want is somebody that can tell the story, somebody who despite the level of effects, despite how broad the canvas is of the mythology that you're building, that can always go back to getting a performance." With a proven track record of adapting literature to film, Branagh approached the movie eager to create a film of epic proportions, but also keen on focusing on character above all else. And it was that all-important title character who would make all the difference.





THOR

When searching for the perfect actor to play Thor, Marvel didn't feel limited to stick to the so-called A-list of movie stars. Unlike many other Hollywood vehicles, Marvel films tend to be driven by the title character, rather than the actor. Said Kevin Feige, "It really allows us the freedom to find who we think would be best, regardless of how famous they are or how many tickets they had sold in their previous film." So when actor Chris Hemsworth stepped into the role, he "just clicked," Craig Kyle said. "I think the last time we had casting this good on one of our projects was Hugh Jackman as Wolverine."





CHAPTER ONE : FORGING A HERO



Said Costume Designer Alexandra Byrne of Chris Hemsworth, “He’s the perfect Thor because he’s fantastic. He’s charming. He’s funny. He’s irresistible. But also physically, he’s just so perfect for the costume. He was working hard in the gym and we were kind of tracking his body and working with him with sculpts and shapes. And we thought at one stage we’d need a muscle suit. You know, we’d need to make him bigger.”



Preliminary concept art by Ryan Meinerding.

CHAPTER ONE : FORGING A HERO

But Hemsworth's dedication to his new role outshined expectations. According to Concept Artist Ryan Meinerding, Hemsworth's unexpected bulk actually caused problems in the wardrobe department. "They had sculpted those chain mail arms which are actually remarkably complicated," Meinerding said. "And, I guess he got a lot bigger, so they had to carve out on the inside so they could actually fit his arms in. I think he actually also had to take them off every so often cause they were so tight still that they were cutting off circulation to his arms."



When it came down to the actual costume design for Thor's trademark uniform, the process was a system of trial and error. "It's definitely hard to find a very concise sort of design inspiration," Meinerding said. "I think honestly Charlie ended coming up with something that was really great." Another main concept artist for the film, Charlie Wen arrived at his final design for Thor by mixing traditional Japanese samurai design with the revolutionary artistic style of comic legend Jack Kirby, and even sprinkling in a bit of modern comic-book flair.



Preliminary concept art by Warren Manser.



Preliminary concept art by Charlie Wen

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Preliminary concept art by Warren Manser.



And actor Chris Hemsworth didn't let his designers down. Said Wen, "I think he brought something to it that wasn't typical. It captured Thor [but at] the same time it felt like, okay, it wasn't just this God of Thunder. There's actually something more human underneath. So, it was really cool to see him start gearing up with the costume, especially, when it just started as an illustration."





RM

“Alex Byrne and the costume department had been working on this stuff for I think a year and a half to two years before we even turned up,” Hemsworth said. “It was an incredibly detailed, beautiful costume.” A costume, it seems, that had as much impact on the actors as it would on moviegoers. According to Hemsworth, “It was the first time I think acting that I had put on the costume and really felt like the character. It just, it sold the picture.”

Unused training-grounds outfit design for an early draft of the screenplay.





CHAPTER ONE : FORGING A HERO



Preliminary concept art by Charlie Wen.

While Thor's core costume presented a variety of challenges, the Thunder God's headgear was just as tricky. Said Costume Designer Alexandra Byrne, "I've done helmets before but not on this scale. And that was great because we had digital forms of the actors so we could sculpt on those, because a helmet is so much about the proportion of the face. The eyes, the jaw line, they have to work in close up. And if they don't, and if you can't see the face, and you can't read the expression, you've got problems."

Preliminary concept art by Ryan Meinerding.

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Chris Hemsworth in Thor's helmet, test photo.



Preliminary concept art by Charlie Wen.

CHAPTER ONE : FORGING A HERO

Looking at the work of a variety of different Thor comic-book artists for inspiration, Byrne and her design team managed to craft a helmet that looked as functional as it was stylized.

It was a task that wasn't easy to accomplish.

Many artists, including the legendary Jack Kirby, tended to exaggerate form for dramatic effect — a luxury the filmmakers didn't have in the realistic world they were constructing.



Thor's helmet, costume still.

An evolutionary process, Thor's costume began with the bare basics; a system of trial and error led to the final detailed version seen in the film.

An early study of the disk placement.



Chris would gain more than 30 pounds of muscle by the time the costume was completed.





But perhaps the most important detail of Thor's uniform was his trademark cape. Said Byrne, "The cape is particularly demanding because it needs to look magical. In the comic books, Kirby uses it as a great graphic device for movement and tension and drama. So we needed to have a cape that could have that amount of expression, but also frame Chris's shape and proportion when he's not moving. And then billow and move, fly with him when he's fighting. Do all those things that it is easy to draw and when it's a piece of fabric, not so easy."



Chris Hemsworth as Thor, production still.

CHAPTER ONE : FORGING A HERO

Thor's cape went through a long and arduous process. According to Byrne, "The cape is made of wool that came from England. We dyed it red.

It has weight in places. It's on a frame. It has structure built into the back of it." And after hours of tinkering and experimenting, Byrne and her crew finally got to a point where they were happy with their finished result. "We got it to a stage where we looked at it and said the cape is working, don't touch it. Just leave it alone."

MJOLNIR

It's a rare occasion when a prop from a film draws the same level of interest and anticipation from fans as some of the movie's stars — but with Thor's trusted hammer, Mjolnir, that was exactly the case. And when designing the iconic weapon, filmmakers were sure to keep this fact in mind. Almost 200 different versions of the famous hammer were designed in the hunt for the perfect super-hero accessory, and when the final design was chosen, the weapon was cast in three different weights. "If we're doing a scene where there's a lot of dialogue and you'll see the hammer close up, you unfortunately have to wield the heaviest hammer," said Russell Bobbitt, the property master on the film. "The heavier the hammer, the more detail it'll give you, the more shine. When [Thor's] doing stunts, we get into sort of lighter ones that are made of foam. And he's able to throw it and catch it and do the things he does."



Every bit of Thor's hammer was thought out and mused over. From its Norse runes to its familiar strap, the hammer had to be perfect before it was finally able to make its way into the film. And the end result was sure to stun. Said Marvel Studio's Kevin Feige, "I'm telling you kids are going to come out of this movie and they're going to be practicing. I think it's going to become one of these, you know, iconic weapons of cinema."

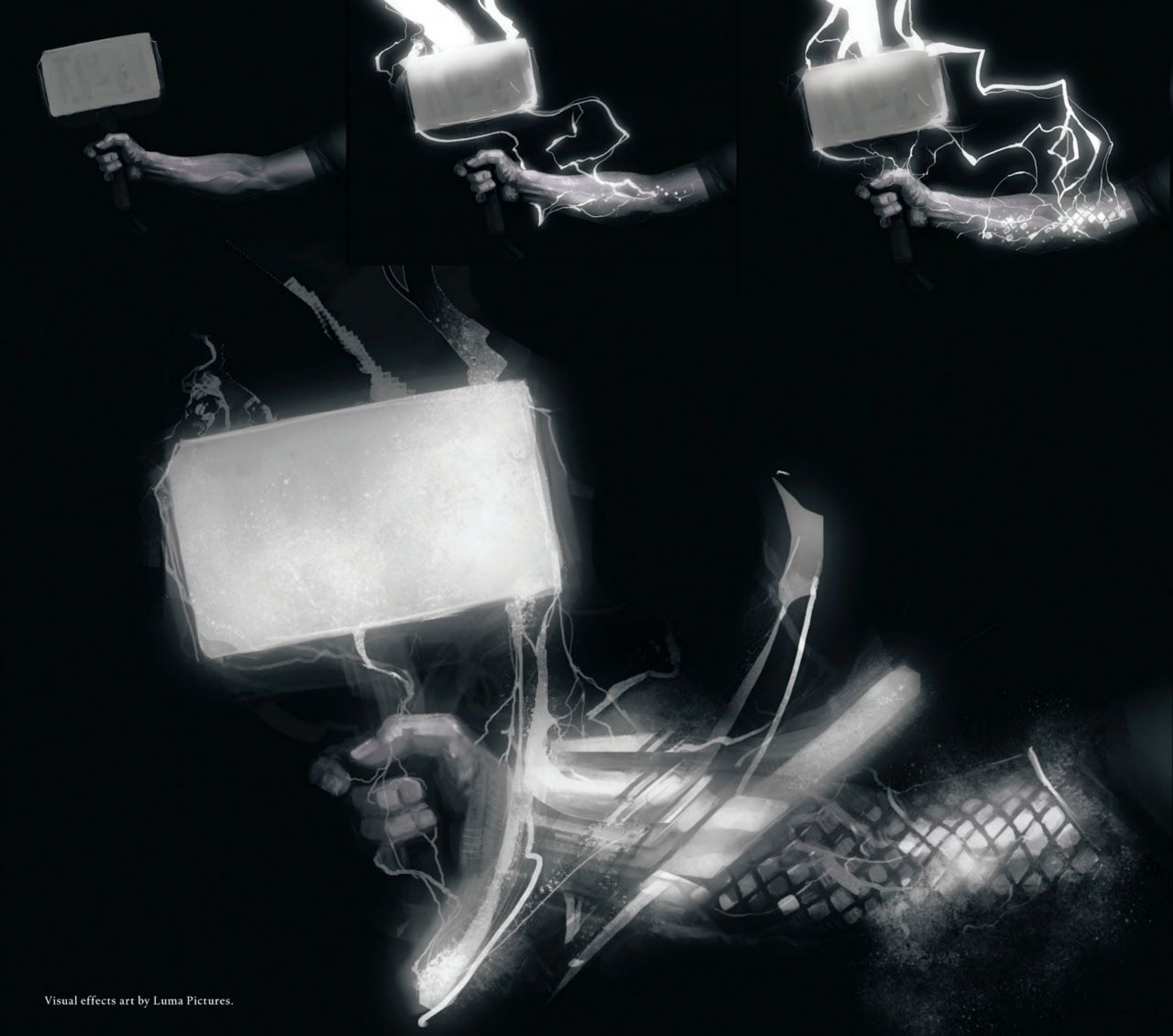






Concept art by Charlie Wen.







Since the hammer is able to summon the lightning and the powers of the storm in the reality of the movie, the filmmakers also labored over the practical functions of their lauded prop. “The hammer does glow, and I did make a couple of fiberglass prototypes of

hammers to light up,” Bobbitt said. “In this particular case, it was better and easier for the computer graphic world to take over on that, so we ended up not shooting anything practically. In this case it was better off in the CG world.”

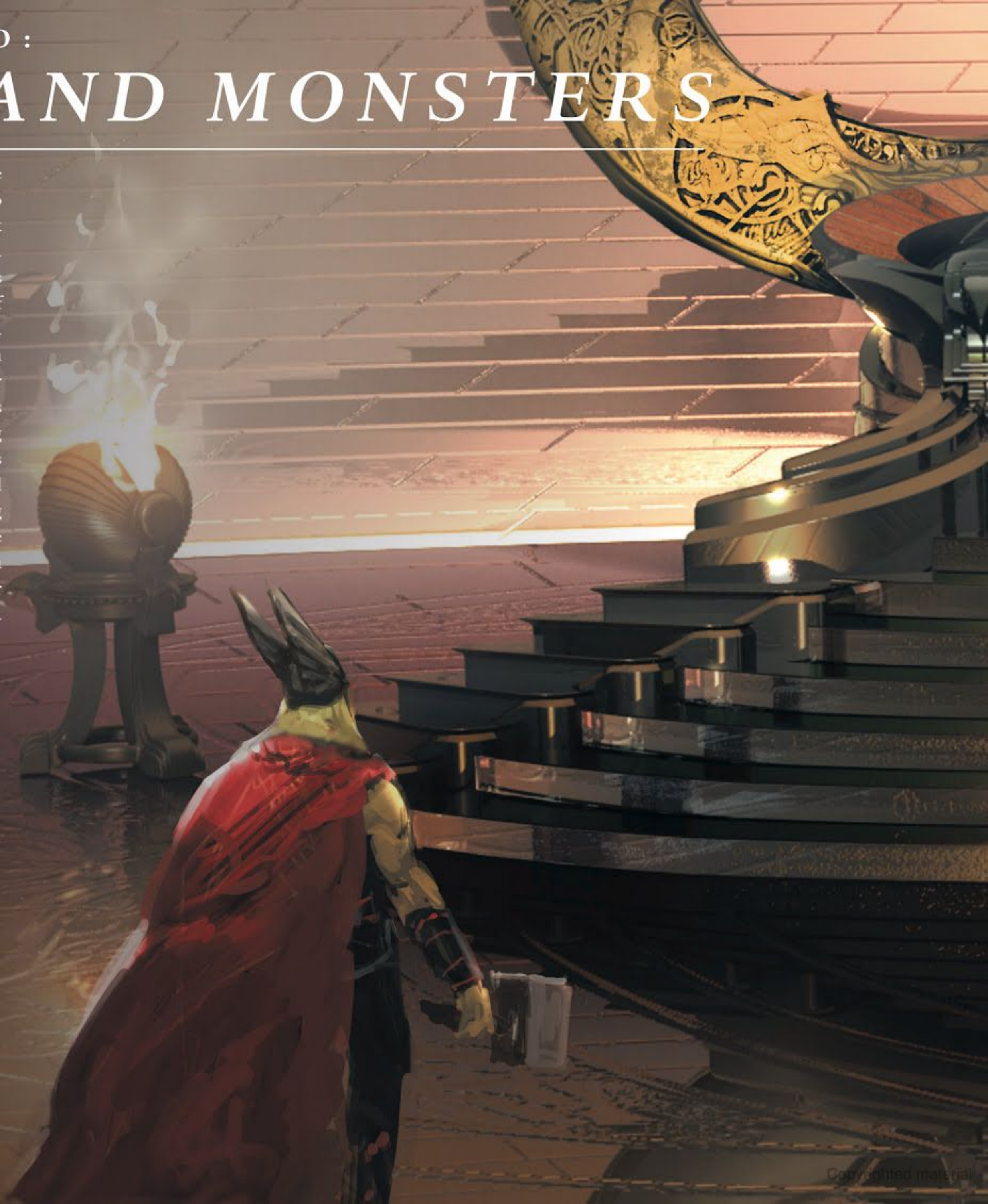
Said Bobbitt, "There is significance to everything we've done on the hammer. There's a story to almost everything we've done with our hero characters. There are runes on the top of the hammer that we researched...because there's a lure involved that you don't sway from in certain areas and this is one of them. He who wields this hammer commands the lightning of the storm."



CHAPTER TWO:

GODS AND MONSTERS

In most super-hero films, the filmmakers are required to develop a costume and iconic look for the title character and main villain. Rarely made lightly, these decisions are often the result of months of creativity and diligent design work. However, the art department on *Thor* was tasked with an even greater challenge. By his very nature, Thor is not only a super hero, but also a being from a faraway world. As such, his home is chock full of strangely clad allies and adversaries, all requiring their own costume and wardrobe design. Costume Designer Alexandra Byrne and Production Designer Bo Welch were up for the challenge.





Odin's Throne Room, concept art by Vance Kovacs.

ODIN ALL-FATHER

With Thor's look nailed down, the next logical step was designing the appearance of his father, the powerful Odin All-father. According to Chris Hemsworth, "Ken [Branagh] said very early on that fathers and sons was what this was about. And I think whether you're playing a god or a human or whatever, you make it real and relatable." To ground the fantastic god in that sense of reality, there was no better choice than world-renowned, Academy Award-winning actor Sir Anthony Hopkins.







Concept art by
Charlie Wen.



Odin in casual garb, concept art by Michael Kutsche.

Crafting the look of the most powerful Norse god was no easy feat. The character had to combine a refined royal presence with Earth-shattering force. “Odin is someone who desperately believes in fate and destiny but chooses to fight against those forces,” Producer Craig Kyle said. “The slightest move of him can lay waste to an army, so he’s not someone who has to raise his voice to get his point across.” In fact, that point was made in spades by Hopkins after he donned Alexandra Byrne’s impressive costume. “The first moment Anthony stepped on that stage in that outfit we got chills,” Kyle said. “It was Odin. And you respected him.”



Anthony Hopkins as Odin, production still.

A seasoned actor with dozens of impressive roles under his belt, Hopkins nevertheless felt inspired by Director Kenneth Branagh's enthusiasm. "I was thinking of retiring and getting out of the business," Hopkins said. "Something about Ken Branagh, he's given me back the chops to work... Working with Ken has been quite an injection of new energy into my life." And while working with Branagh may have been just what Hopkins was looking for, he did struggle with one minor aspect of his character: Odin's eye patch. "These sets are quite dangerous if you don't know where you are... especially with one eye," Hopkins said. "So you have to be very, very careful, moving around like a kind of turtle or tortoise."





LOKI

In a film primarily about the relationship between fathers and sons, the character of Loki, Thor's half-brother, was an instrumental part of the story. "The script is really two things," Producer Kevin Feige said. "It's the origin story of Thor, but it's also the origin story of Loki, his stepbrother, and as any comic reader knows, the villain of the piece. But he's an interesting villain, he's not the mustache twirling I will destroy you villain."



Preliminary concept art by Ryan Meinerding.



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“He’s conflicted,” Feige said. “They’re brothers. Thor is the favorite son, destined to be the heir to the throne of Odin and that kind of rubs Loki the wrong way, but at the same time they’ve had a great experience growing up together. Odin has been a tough but good and fair father to both of them.” Despite Loki’s relationship to his brother, Feige was quick to point out the character’s true base nature. “Loki has always had this part of him that he can’t quite repress that is the trickster, that is cunning, that does rub people the wrong way.”

When it came time to cast Loki, Director Kenneth Branagh looked to the stage to find an actor almost chameleon-like in his craft, Tom Hiddleston. Hiddleston's skills not only came in handy in front of the camera, but also in the dressing room. Said Costume Designer Alexandra Byrne, "Tom as Loki was great because I know Tom, and he's got an amazing adaptable body. And we wanted Loki to be adaptable to the different situations, but equally we know the comic-book image of Loki with the big horned helmet."

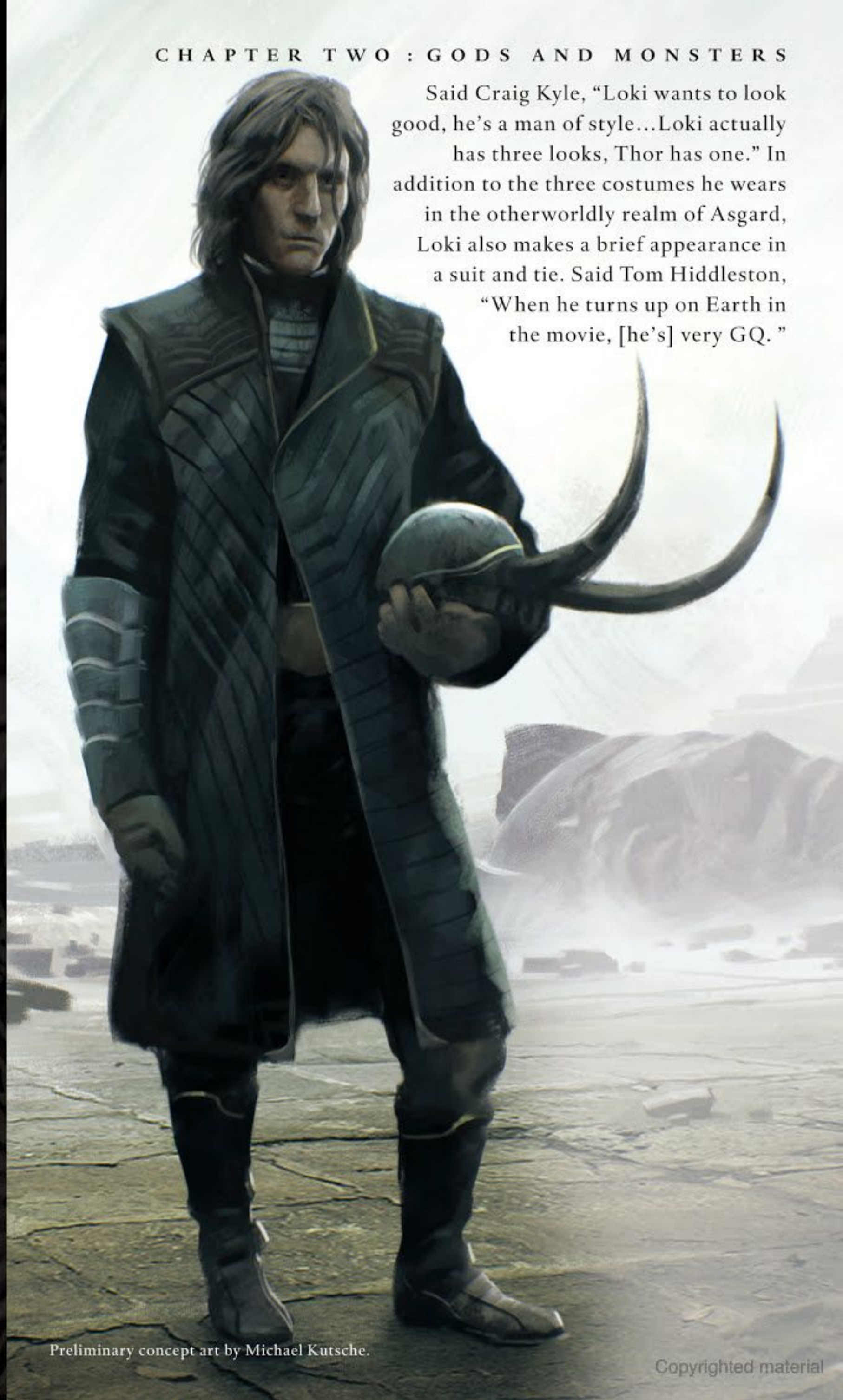




Concept art by Ryan Meinertding.

CHAPTER TWO : GODS AND MONSTERS

Said Craig Kyle, "Loki wants to look good, he's a man of style...Loki actually has three looks, Thor has one." In addition to the three costumes he wears in the otherworldly realm of Asgard, Loki also makes a brief appearance in a suit and tie. Said Tom Hiddleston, "When he turns up on Earth in the movie, [he's] very GQ. "



Preliminary concept art by Michael Kutsche.



Preliminary costume still.



Concept art by Charlie Wen.



Tom Hiddleston, who meticulously researched his role by reading as much Norse mythology as he could get his hands on and dozens of comic books, including J. Michael Straczynski's recent run on *Thor*, dyed his hair and eyebrows black for the role of Loki. However, he still didn't feel completely transformed into the trickster god until he was finally handed Loki's signature horned helmet. Said Hiddleston, "To wear this thing, it feels enormously powerful."

Tom Hiddleston as Loki, production still.



Final costume still.



Concept art by Charlie Wen.



Said Hiddleston about his rather heavy costume, "I think I've already lost about 30 pounds in the course of this shoot." But despite his discomfort, Byrne's costumes only added to the actor's performance. "It makes you stand tall and stand proud, and there's also something about the brow," Hiddleston said. "It sort of makes you look out from underneath it, which kind of gives you a bit of mischief."

Production still.
Copyrighted material

FRIGGA

Portrayed by well-known actress Rene Russo, Odin's wife Frigga wasn't quite the costuming challenge Alexandra Byrne had originally imagined. "By that time we were so well into the world of Asgard that it...just followed on," Byrne said. "It seemed there was a way that they worked within that world." The result left quite an impression on the actress nonetheless. "I've never had costumes like this and probably won't ever again," Russo said. "The costumes are phenomenal. I mean just like unbelievable."



Frigga in banquet attire, concept art by Charlie Wen.



Rene Russo as Frigga, production still.



Frigga in ceremonial gown, concept art by Charlie Wen.

CHAPTER TWO : GODS AND MONSTERS



"The truth is, I think when I took the part I underestimated really the grandeur of it," Russo said. "[Alexandra Byrne] showed me some sketches, she looked at me, I said to her, 'Alex, how do you know that these colors would work on me?' She goes, 'Well, I looked at you.' That doesn't always happen."



Frigga's Ladies,
preliminary
concept art by
Constantine
Serkeris.
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HEIMDALL

Another costume design that seemed simply to flow out of the look Alexandra Byrne and her staff had created for Asgard was the hefty suit of armor worn by Heimdall, gatekeeper to the Norse gods. The performance of Idris Elba — no stranger to comic-book films, having already starred in *The Losers* and soon to appear in *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance* — captured the true essence of Heimdall, an immovable object in godly form. “We liked the personality that Heimdall, who is sort of the center of the Nine Realms, has [that is] something different than most,” said Property Master Russell Bobbitt, who crafted the hero’s sword. “It sort of spoke out to all of us.”



Idris Elba as Heimdall,
production still.



Concept art by Vance Kovacs.

CHAPTER TWO : GODS AND MONSTERS



Production still.

CHAPTER THREE:

BROTHERS IN ARMS

While Director Kenneth Branagh and Production Designer Bo Welch took their influences for the look of *Thor* from many sources, several elements were derived almost solely from the classic Marvel comic books. According to Producer Kevin Feige, “There is a lot in Norse mythology. There’s a lot of characters, there’s a lot of conflict, there’s a lot of rich, rich material to pull from. But equally in the original Marvel comics of Thor, there are a lot of original characters and a lot of original villains that Stan and Walt and Joe and all of the great writers and artists of the comics brought to the mythology.”

Key among those characters are the fabled Warriors Three, Thor’s lifelong companions and battle-worn allies — often accompanied by their fourth, unofficial member, the lady warrior Sif. Crafting these characters was just as instrumental to the design staff as any of the main roles. Often, this ragtag group of warriors served the film as humorous relief, even amid dire life-and-death conflicts. Said Feige, “They I think, and I hope, will steal every scene that they’re in.”



Concept art by Vance Kovacs.

VOLSTAGG

Slimmed down slightly from his gluttonous depiction in the comics, Volstagg “is larger than life in every aspect,” according to the actor who portrayed him, Ray Stevenson. “He has this appetite that I think is infectious. I’ve had a

little two-year-old boy...and when he cries, he cries with every cell in his being, and when he laughs, every cell of his being laughs out loud...and this is Volstagg. He wears his heart, which is huge, but he wears it right on his sleeve.”



Ray Stevenson as Volstagg,
production still.



CHAPTER THREE : BROTHERS IN ARMS



Production still.

HOGUN

Playing the grim member of the Warriors Three was actor Tadanobu Asano, whose rather silent manner sat just fine with the foreign-born actor. Said Asano, “[Hogun’s] function is that he notices things that other people sort of don’t

notice and cannot notice.” Although Hogun’s role was relatively small in the film, Concept Artist Charlie Wen cited the hero as being one of his most satisfying designs. His appearance is based on historical figures in the vein of Genghis Khan.



Tadanobu Asano as Hogun, production still.



Concept art by Charlie Wen.

FANDRAL

CHAPTER THREE : BROTHERS IN ARMS

As described by Joshua Dallas, the actor portraying him in *Thor*, Fandral “is an adventurer, a swashbuckler. He is an irrepressible romantic. Fandral considers himself a real kind of ladies’ man. It’s debatable how successful he is at that, but if a lady doesn’t take his fancy right away, he thinks they’ll soon come around to the idea.”



Joshua Dallas as Fandral,
production still.

SIF

The sometime romantic opposite of Thor in the comics, Sif is as much a warrior as any of her male counterparts. Played by actress Jaimie Alexander, a longtime Marvel fan, Sif “is one of the boys, yet she’s this powerhouse woman,” according to Alexander, who was quite taken with Alexandra Byrne’s costume designs. “[Byrne]’s all about promoting a healthy female figure, about the female shape, the hourglass,” Alexander said. And while retaining the character’s femininity, Byrne’s designs didn’t forget Sif’s strong nature. Said Alexander, “It’s real armor. It’s hard. It’s metal. It’s incredible.”

Concept art by Charlie Wen.



Copyrighted material

CHAPTER THREE : BROTHERS IN ARMS



Jaimie Alexander as Sif, production still.



Production still.

EINHERJAR GUARDS AND ASGARD CITIZENS

While Sif and the Warriors Three took an active role as Thor's allies in the film, much thought went into the look of those Asgardians who remained in the background. Said Alexandra

Byrne, "In terms of Asgard and that world, we're trying to create an unknown world, but it has to be credible. It has to be believable. So the people have to belong in their environment."



CHAPTER THREE : BROTHERS IN ARMS

Asgardian Citizens,
concept art by
Constantine Serkeris.





Einherjar Guard, concept art by
Constantine Serkeris.



Production still.

“In the Asgardian world, [Production Designer] Bo [Welch] and I evolved the phrase of ancient modernism,” Alexandra Byrne said. “I would say the biggest input for Asgard was the original artwork of Jack Kirby.” By referring to Kirby’s work and other modern influences, as well as the ancient appearance of the Vikings, Byrne and Welch found a happy medium and a stylized new vision for the denizens of the Asgardian plane.



Concept art by
Constantine Serkeris.



CHAPTER FOUR:

BRAVE NEW WORLDS

As writer Stan Lee and his artistic collaborators developed the Marvel Universe, he based most of his characters in a realistic version of New York City. Stan's reasoning at the time was that New York was his home and what he knew. But when crafting Asgard, the realm of the Norse gods, with artist Jack Kirby, Lee stepped out of his comfort zone and into the far reaches of his imagination. So when adapting *Thor* to film, Director Kenneth Branagh and Production Designer Bo Welch had no choice but to follow suit.

"The challenge was other worlds, multiple dimensions. And when you sit down and study all the various runs of the comics, they're wildly different from one run to the next," Welch said. "Your visual cues are all over the place."

While most comic-book movies are firmly grounded in our reality, *Thor* spends equal time in the realm of fantasy. The result was twice the conceptual work for Welch as in a normal film. Thankfully, the inventive production designer had a system in place. Said Welch, "First you hyperventilate, then you panic, [and then] you start with research."



ASGARD

“The hardest part was finding the aesthetic of Asgard,” Bo Welch said. “It was so taxing on my poor diminished brain.” Despite the challenges, Welch and his team created a breathtaking new reality for the home of the gods — one part Norse legend and one part impossible dream. Said Producer Kevin Feige, “The artwork is finally really coming to fruition in a way that it’s not an old-fashioned stone and wooden civilization. This is a civilization that is so far advanced from us that it may as well be magic.”





Approach to Asgard, preliminary keyframe by Wil Madoc Rees.

ASGARD APPROACH_V5(b) REES '09



Odin's Palace, concept art by Wil Madoc Rees.
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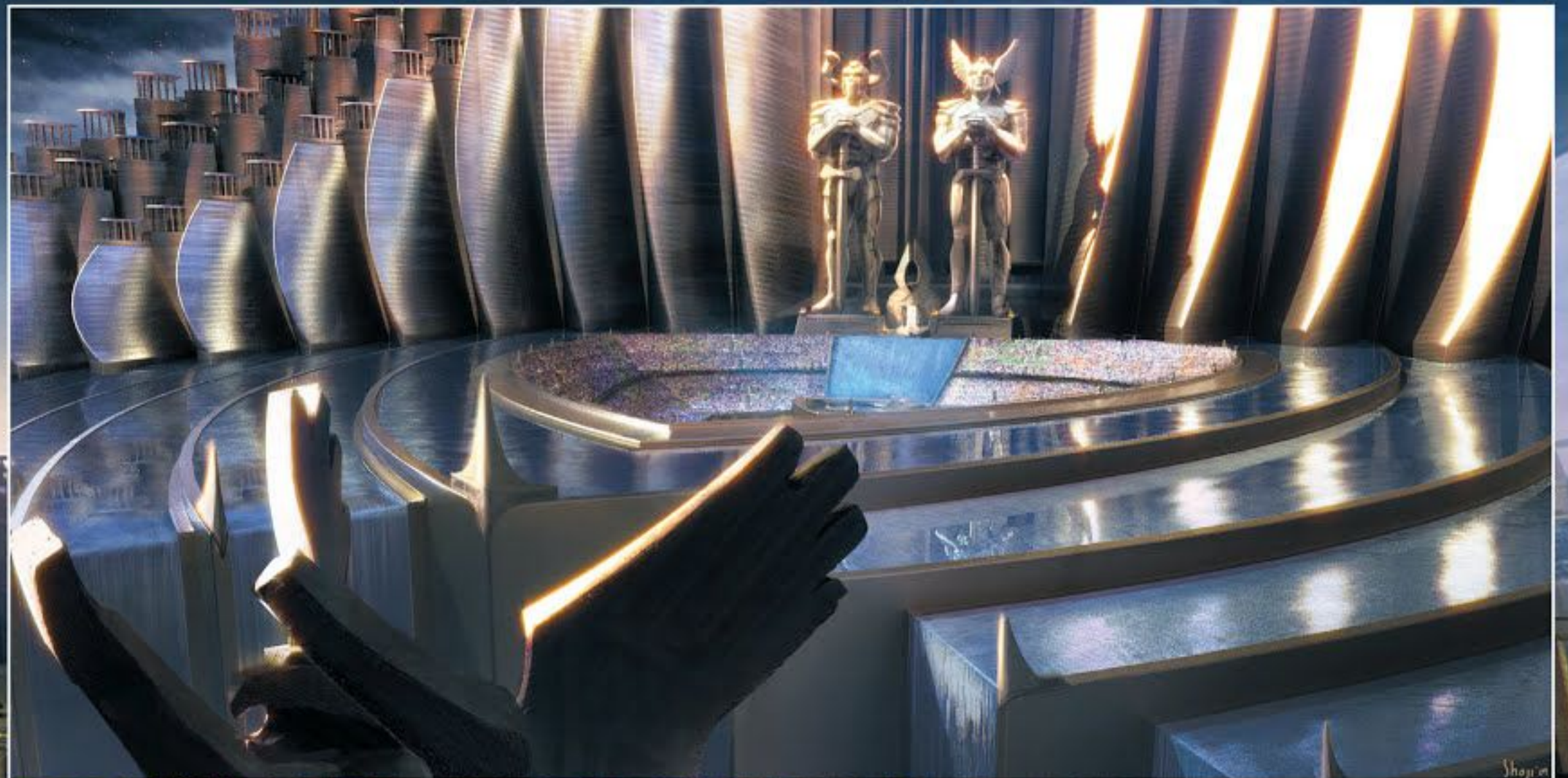
Welch approached Asgard as a streamlined idea, but with a strong sense of architecture to give it some substance. Said Welch, “[Asgard] evolved into a very minimalist architectural calm environment. The technology of their building construction, the methodology you have no idea, you don’t know how they get at it. It’s so advanced the human brain cannot even comprehend it.”





Said Welch, "We had decided that Asgard [is] inhabited by warrior gods, but they live at the top of the Nine Realms. Their privileged perspective on the universe should be so advanced, so absolutely peaceful and elegant that it should not be cluttered with the normal details that we normally associate human beings with."





From its quiet, simplistic halls to its majestic auditorium, Welch and Branagh conceived of an impressive reality for gods to dwell in, despite Welch's original reservations. "On a purely theoretical level Asgard should be nothing. I mean perfection is nothing," Welch said. "But you have to have something in front of the camera. So that's where we're going, a whiff of Jack Kirby, a whip of Norse mythology, and a large dollop of modern architecture."



Odin's Tower, Allthing Tunnel exit and entrance (inset), concept art by Craig Shoji.



ASGARD : THRONE ROOM

According to Welch, “Asgard is the center of the universe in the world of Thor. Asgard is at the seat of the heavens. It’s at the top of the universe. It’s the main governing body within the Nine Realms.” So when crafting the look of Odin’s throne, Welch kept the idea of that regal stature in his mind — also attempting to create a perfect Zen-like modern aesthetic.





The impressive nature of Welch's designs constantly astounded the rest of the crew, harkening back to an older age of filmmaking. According to First Assistant Director Luc Etienne, "We had Odin's chamber, the vault, the coronation room. All this that says when you enter...you had the feeling that you are 50 years in the past... when you had those big, huge sets."





Concept art by Vance Kovacs.



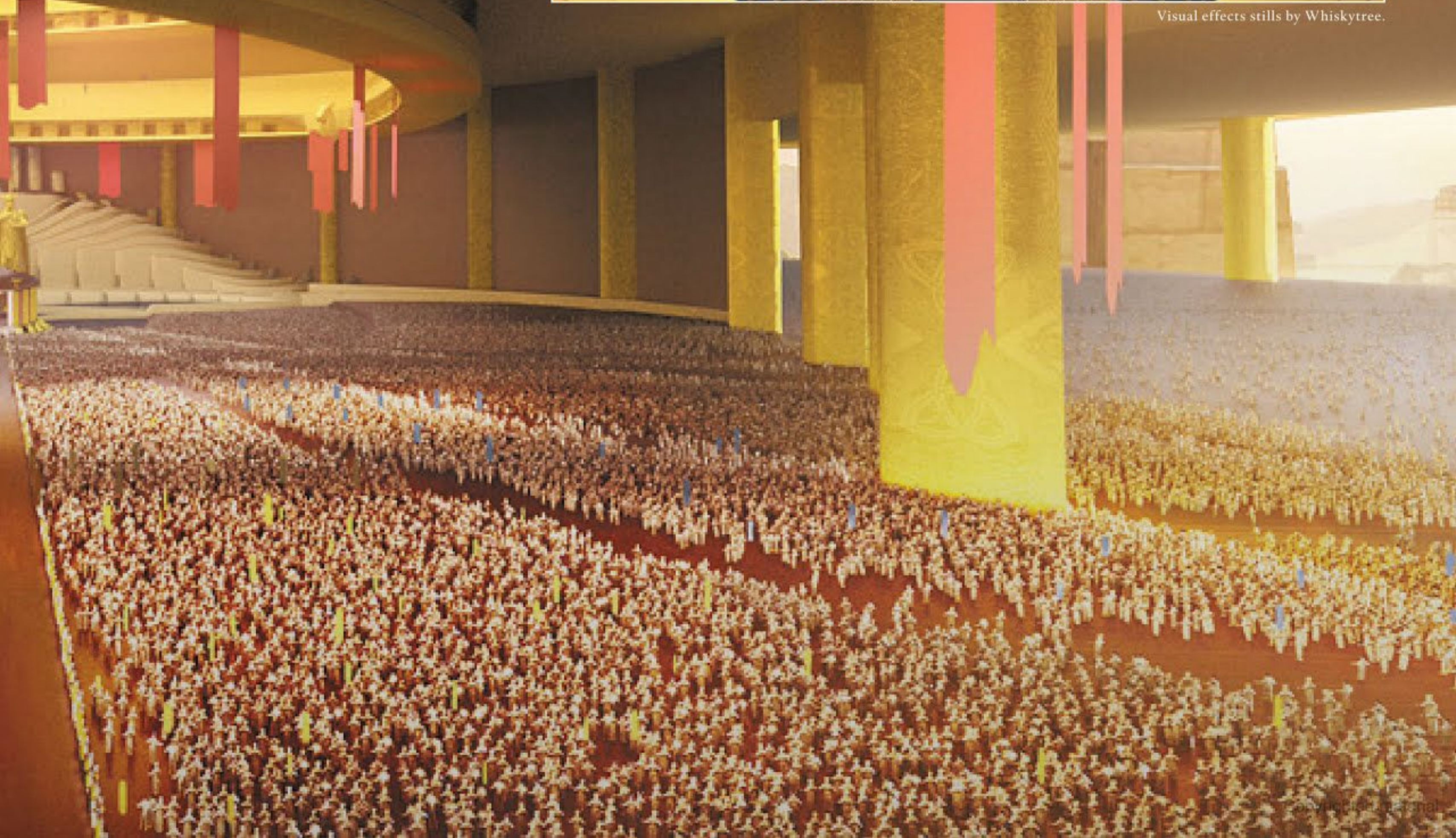
Concept art by Raj Rhal.

Welch's designs were almost the visual equivalent of a contradiction in terms. His version of Asgard was both simple and decadent, full of otherworldly citizens with the same basic tastes.



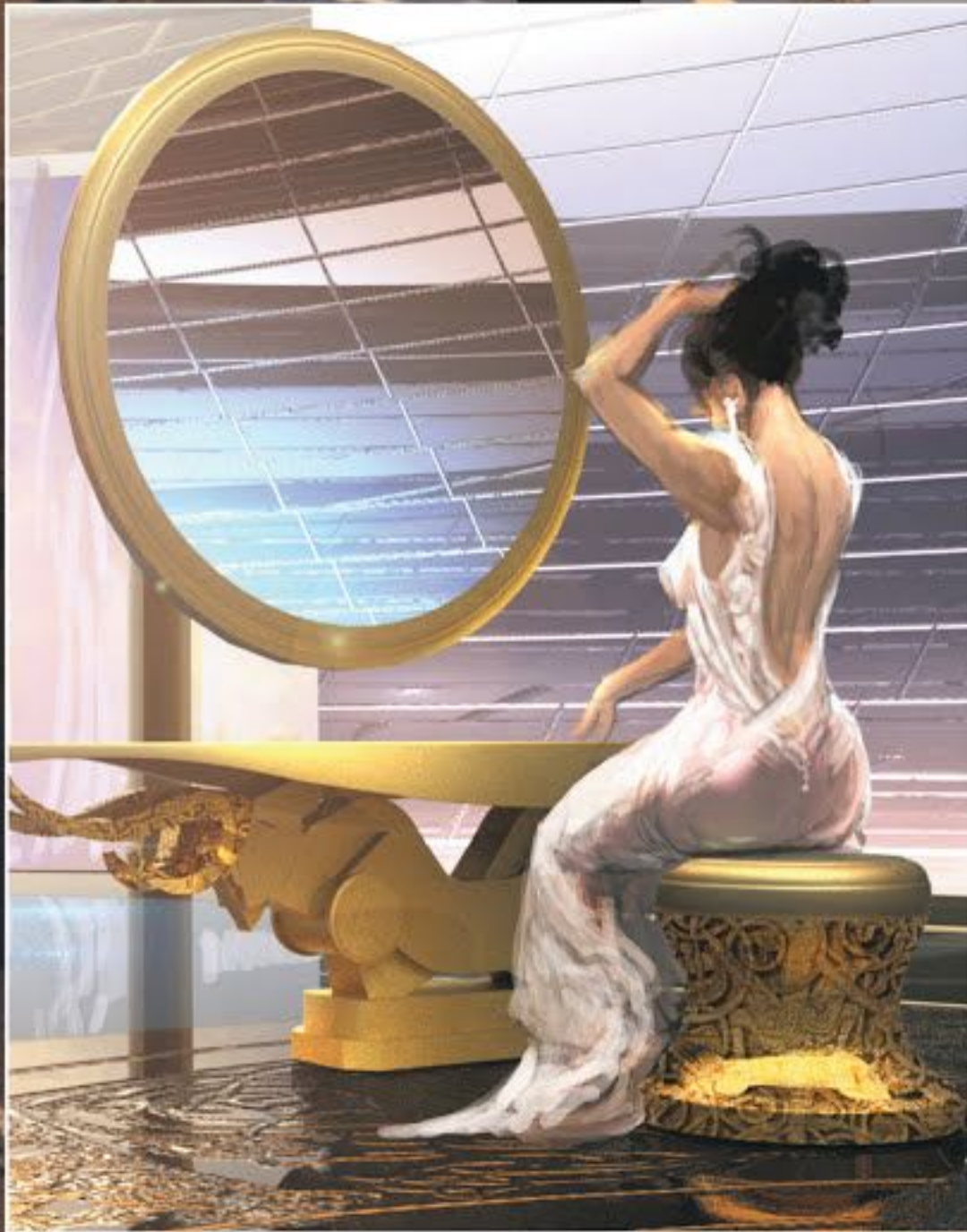


Visual effects stills by Whiskytree.

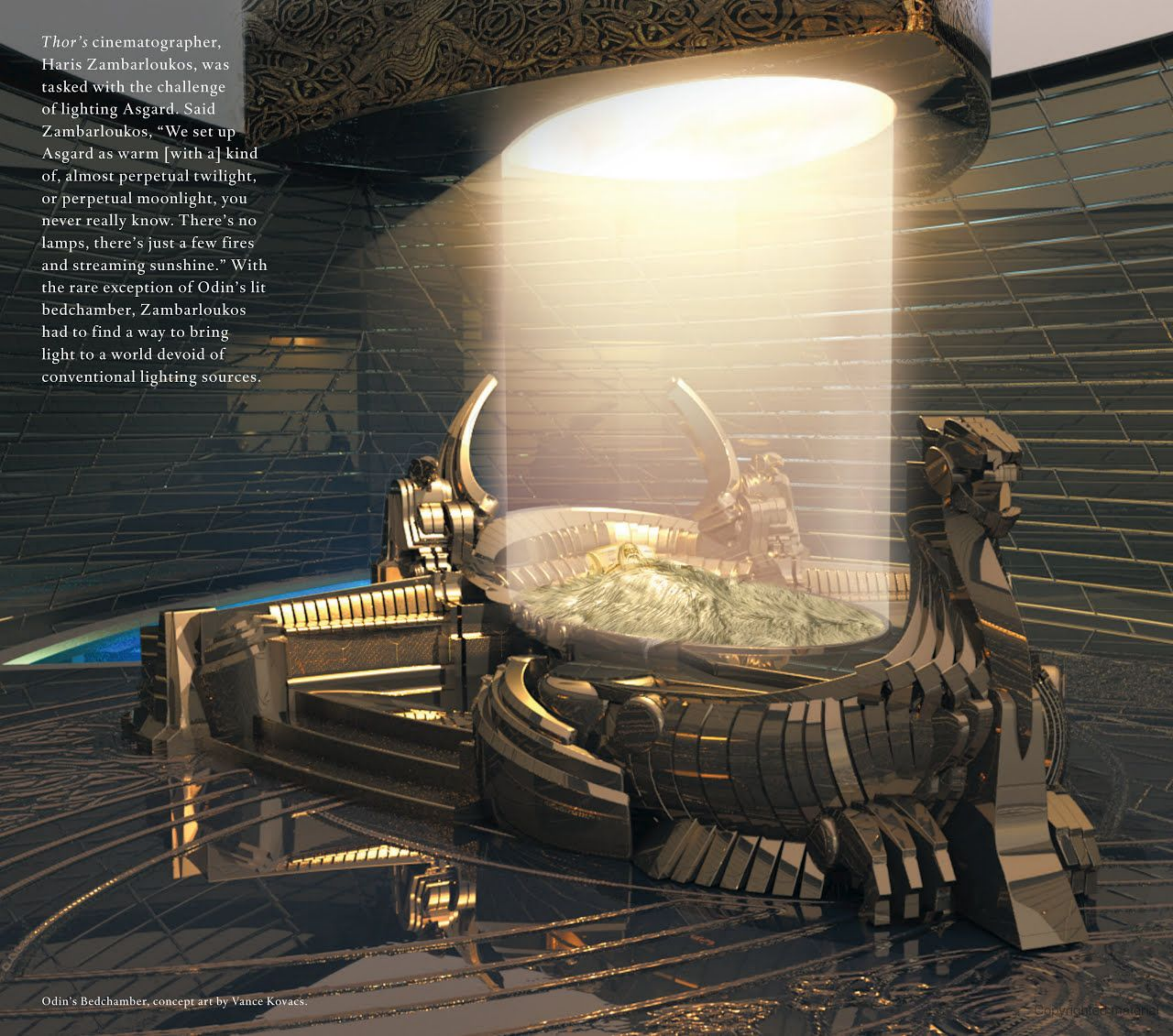


ASGARD : ODIN'S CHAMBERS

Welch particularly attempted to channel Jack Kirby when creating Odin's various chambers in Asgard. Said Welch, "Specifically the Kirby aesthetic is embraced in the so-called furniture of Asgard. Odin's bed in his chamber, his throne, very specific pieces set against very serene environments. The furnishings are very Kirby, and I think it's the right balance between Kirby vs. modernism with a whiff of ancient Norse thrown in there for good measure."



Thor's cinematographer, Haris Zambarloukos, was tasked with the challenge of lighting Asgard. Said Zambarloukos, "We set up Asgard as warm [with a] kind of, almost perpetual twilight, or perpetual moonlight, you never really know. There's no lamps, there's just a few fires and streaming sunshine." With the rare exception of Odin's lit bedchamber, Zambarloukos had to find a way to bring light to a world devoid of conventional lighting sources.





ASGARD : PALACE GROUNDS

The pinnacle of streamlined splendor, Asgard's exteriors are no less impressive than its interiors. Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos described the almost ethereal color palette of the gods' backyard: "A lot of gold colors, and a lot of sweeping shots, that just make you feel like you're floating through that space."





ASGARD : THE HEALING ROOM

As a modern movie script is a constantly evolving, organic process, the Healing Room glimpsed in the finished film originally played a larger role in the story, as the almost mystical medical procedures of Asgard were examined in more detail. However, the impressive chamber still served the movie well as a place for the Warriors Three to gather themselves after battle.





Production still.



ASGARD : BANQUET HALL

A place of raucous entertainment and celebrations, owing particular influence to the culture of the ancient Vikings, the Banquet Hall served as one of the more familiar rooms in an otherwise fantastical realm. By sheer necessity, Welch was forced to add a few more details and props than were found in other parts of the palace. The room was meant to be a functional dining hall above all else. Even the gods needed to eat from time to time.





ASGARD : PALACE ROOMS

One of the recurring themes in Welch's Asgard designs was the royal insignias and patterns found on many of the sets' walls or floors. Said Welch, "There is a runic language, it's

just sort of a vestige of Norse mythology that we actually embraced in props and carvings in walls...We thought it looked cool and thought we might as well assign real meaning to it."





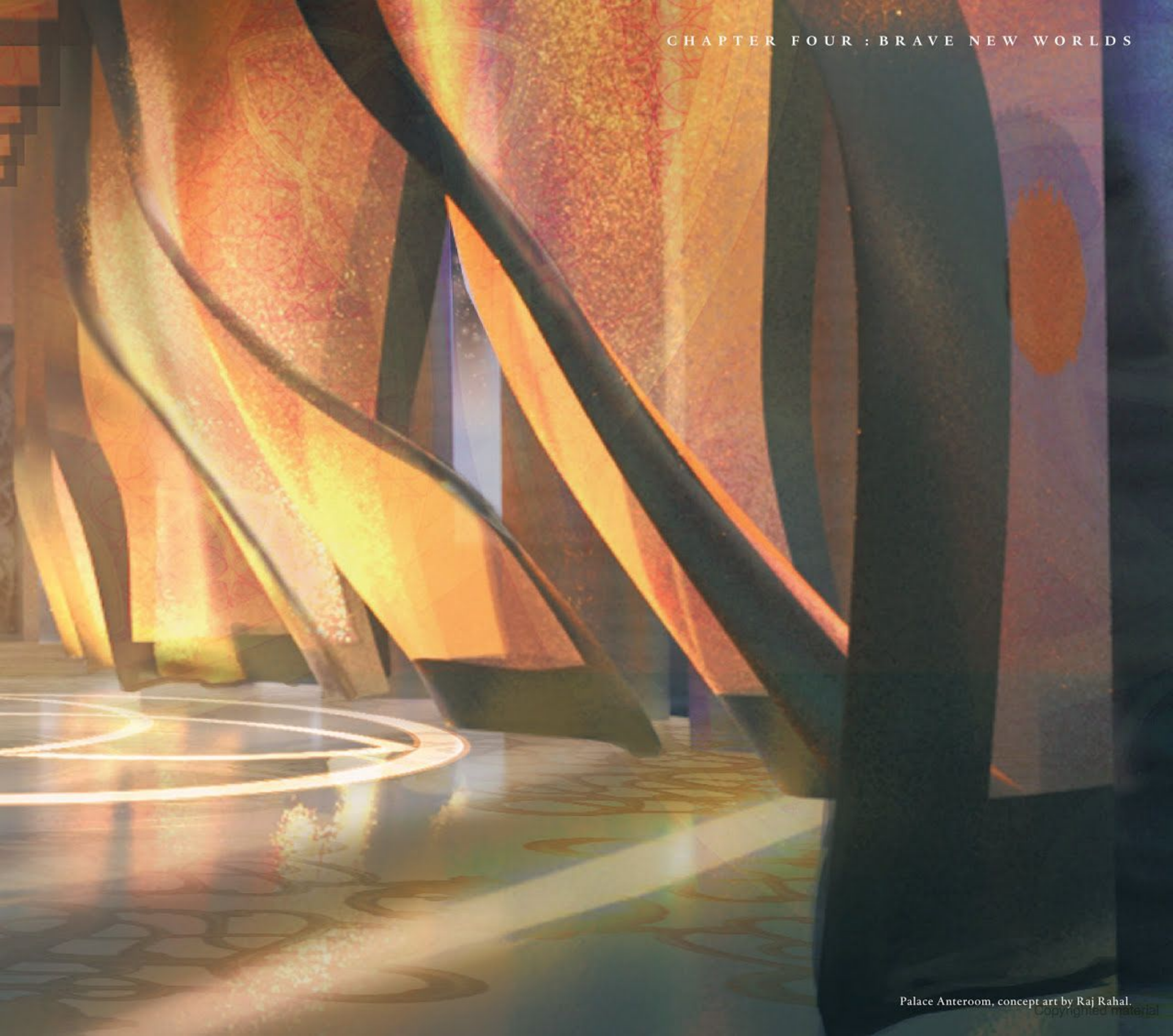
Although many of the sets seen in *Thor* take advantage of some of the latest advancements in CGI technology, Welch was constantly striving to create as many real sets as possible. Said Welch, “You begin the negotiation between what is real [and] what is digital, and it’s always an advantage to get as much as you can in real just because then it gives actors and directors and everyone else something to hang on to, and I think it can evoke layers of performance and value.”





And Welch's hard work seemed to pay off immediately. Some of the actors even thought the set designs were destined to steal the show. According to Sir Anthony Hopkins, "He showed me the designs and I thought well that's it, I don't have to do much; I just show up and learn my lines and do it. That's all acting's about really. Grow the beard, put on the armor, let it happen."





ASGARD : RAINBOW BRIDGE

One of Welch's toughest challenges rested on the outskirts of Asgard: the Rainbow Bridge, the essential pathway that connects Midgard (Earth) to Asgard. Said Welch, "In the source material, the Rainbow Bridge when it's drawn by Jack Kirby it's cool and charming but there's something about a literal Rainbow Bridge that's dangerously scary to me, the palette, the connotation of rainbows...so we spent a lot of time generating various versions of what the Rainbow Bridge should look like."





Welch and his team decided to create an almost living, breathing entity with its own life. “We looked at it just moving you know,” Welch said, “constantly pulsing electrical electron energy...[It’s] never really static. That’s the beauty of a movie.”









ASGARD : HEIMDALL'S OBSERVATORY

But it was in the Heimdall's Observatory set, where Welch had the most freedom, that his designs really shined. "The Observatory was a brand-new location. Never created in the books, never before realized," Producer Craig Kyle said. "And it is by far the most beautiful set any of us at Marvel have ever walked onto." The Observatory was Welch's own concoction. Said Welch, "There was no prop, it was simply the character Heimdall standing on the Rainbow Bridge, staring into space and guarding Asgard, which was always behind him at the end of a Rainbow Bridge."



Production still.



Concept art by Vance Kovacs.

CHAPTER FOUR : BRAVE NEW WORLDS



Concept art by Craig Shoji.
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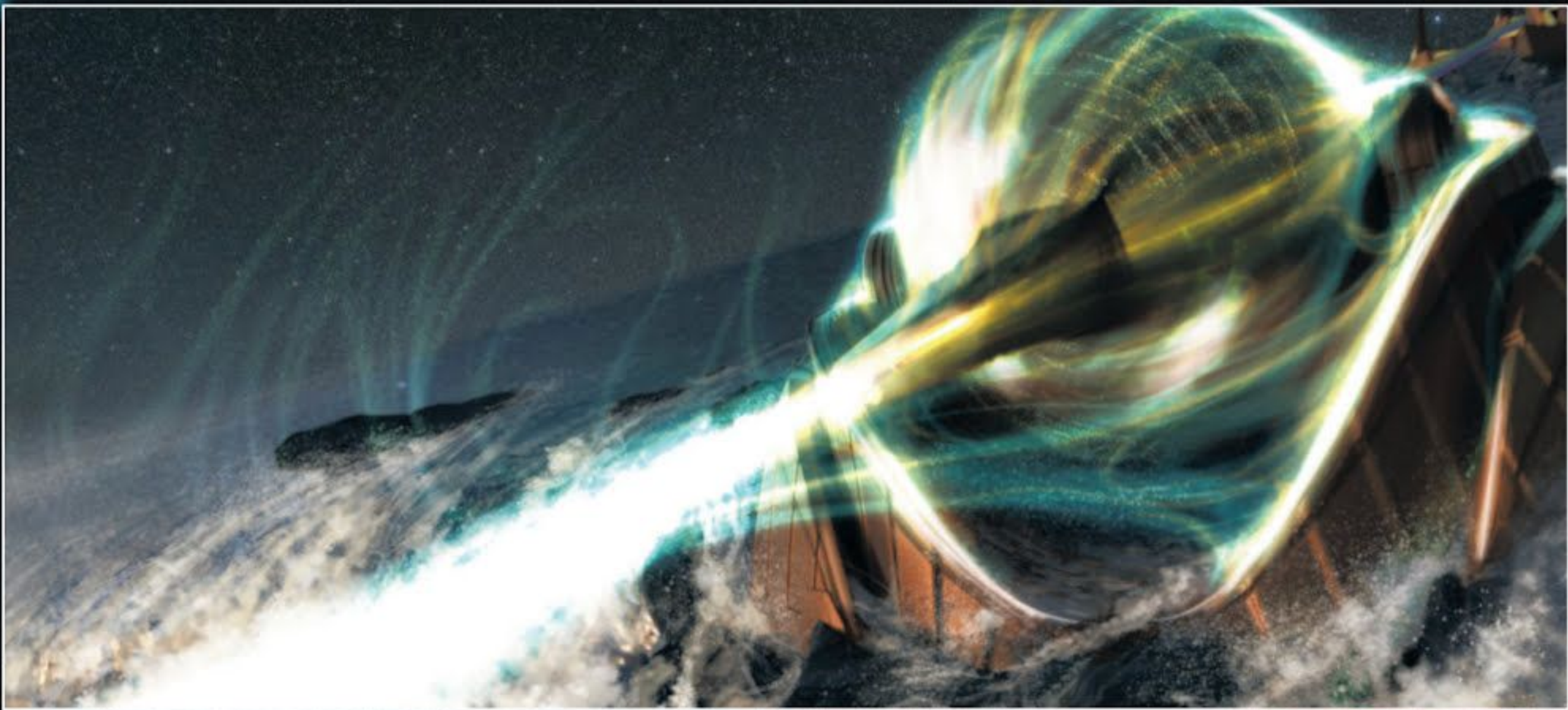


CHAPTER FOUR : BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Welch decided to create an observatory for Heimdall after reading the script. “When we read the screenplay there were pages and pages and pages of scene to happen,” Welch said. “It didn’t seem like you’d want to spend that amount of time and that amount of page count with characters and [have] nothing behind them but deep space.”

After spending months on its design, Welch and his crew constructed the Observatory — what many considered the most impressive set in the film. Said Screenwriter Don Payne, “I walked on stage one time and I was amazed that they’d built Heimdall’s Observatory. I thought it was all going to be green screen. It’s very impressive.”

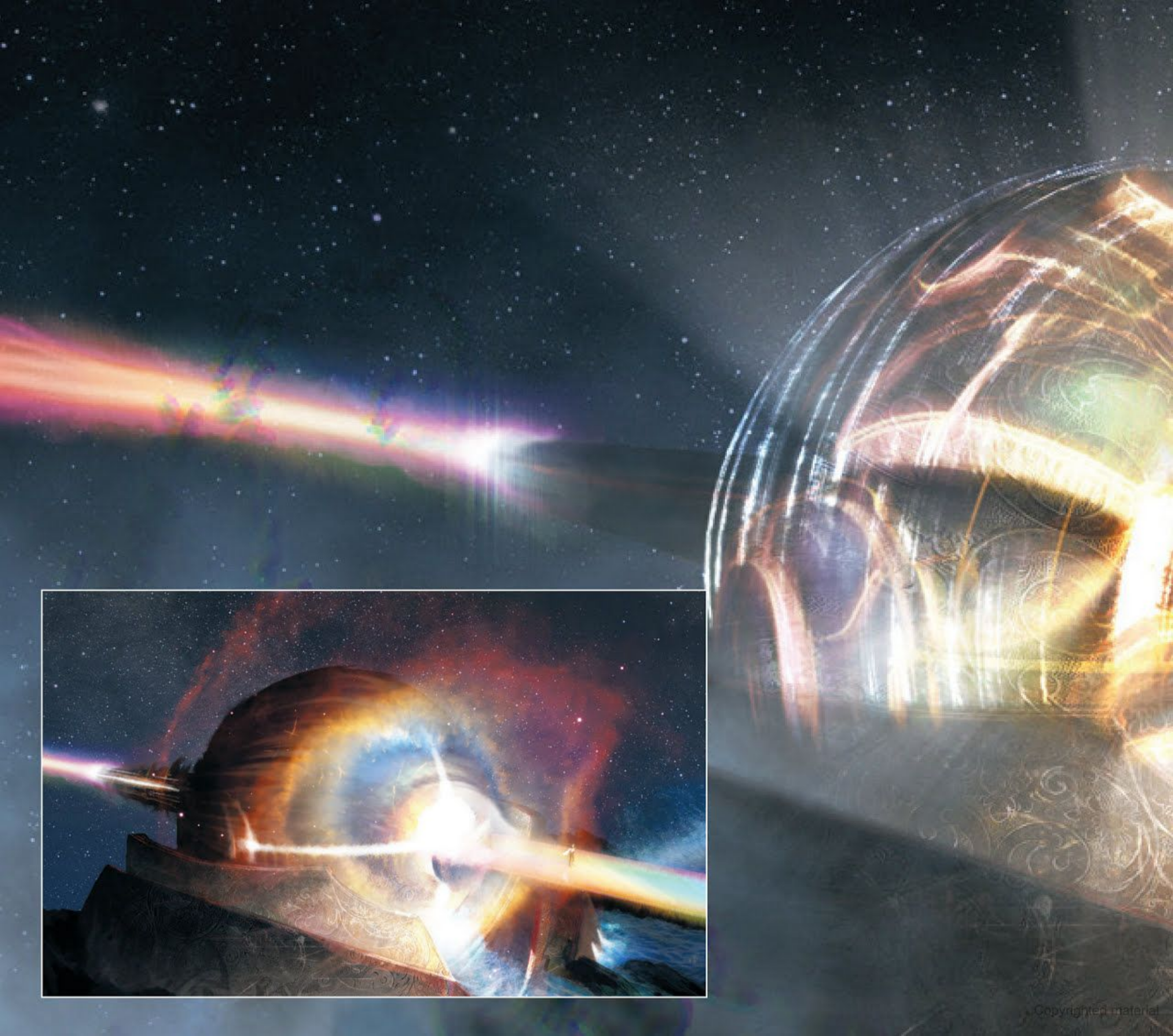






CHAPTER FOUR : BRAVE NEW WORLDS

As the link between Asgard and the other eight realms of reality, the Observatory serves as the engine that channels the so-called Bifrost energy and enables users to travel to the other eight realms.





JOTUNHEIM

The cold and barren frozen wasteland that stands as a staunch opposite to the warm golden glow of Asgard, Jotunheim comprises cruel and heartless terrain. Said Welch, "Jotunheim is one of the Nine Realms and in its day was a powerful advanced civilization not unlike Asgard but with a malevolent intent underneath it all. So with that in mind, Odin was forced to take their Casket of Ancient Winters, and it's pretty much destroyed the place. It's slowly splintering away and falling into deep space."













Said Welch, “We designed dozens and dozens of hypothetical Jotunheim environments and arrived at a hybrid of many different pieces. But hopefully [it] is a cohesive concept that utilizes ice and rock, and oddly enough is heartbreaking and beautiful at the same time.”



Jotunheim Temple, preliminary concept art by Wil Madoc Rees and Jim Carson (inset).







Flake City, preliminary concept art.



Copyrighted material



In creating the overall look for Jotunheim, Welch's research began to border on the scientific. "Their world, as a concept, we took it to a molecular level, and I looked at ice under the microscope," Welch said. "Then I looked at bits of snow... Basically the set is designed around the concept of extruding ice into almost a gothic cathedral shape. But it's not just gothic, it's ice-driven because that's the backbone of their planet."



Thor entering the Jotunheim Temple, concept art by Will Madoc Rees (top) and Jim Carson.

Once Welch and his crew fully realized Jotunheim, it fell to Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos to light the scene. Said Zambarloukos, "That was a hard one to figure out the strategy for because it is both an open planet at twilight, yet had to be dark and ominous. So we had to create a path where they walked down that seems to be open, and shows the landscape."





Said Colm Feore, the actor who portrayed the Frost Giants' leader, Laufey, "There was no place that I looked that didn't have something I could touch. Or play or stand on. Although they've done extraordinary things beyond that to make it complete for the cinema, for those of us working in the space, it was a fully realized world, which adds to your ability to do it properly. Acting is, let's face it, it's pretending; lying for money. Anything anybody can do to help that reality really is useful. And helps you build credibility. And if you have credibility, the chances are it'll show in your eyes. And that you'll just be a little bit better. And that'll make it into the movie, and not left on the floor."



With Welch again not willing to allow his meticulously designed world to be rendered simply with the use of green screen technology and CGI, many of the Jotunheim environments were practical sets. Said Feore, "To be able to say...I'm actually playing in this base, with these people. We all are completely functional. It just makes the reality of those moments that Ken [Branagh] is asking for a little bit easier to hang on to because the world is so complete."













FROST GIANTS

Jotunheim's residents, the Frost Giants, proved an entirely new type of challenge for the design team. They weren't just creating a culture as they had with the Asgardians. Welch and company had to realize an entirely

new race. Said Welch, "We want to embrace the source material but also bring a fresh, modern perspective to it. They're scary, but they're also sort of elegant in their stature, in their markings, and in their design."



According to Producer Kevin Feige, “And when you hear Frost Giants, they’ve been drawn anywhere from 30’ in the comics to normal height with everything from blue skin to completely made of ice. So we had our work cut out for us to design something...The most important part is that they’re characters. They’re not monsters. They’re not creatures. They’re characters.”





Lighting the Frost Giants was an organic process for Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos. “The darker we made the Frost Giants, the better they looked,” he said. And Zambarloukos’s decision succeeded on two levels. Not only did the dark lighting choice make the Giants seem all the more threatening, but it also caused their Asgardian opponents to look more heroic.



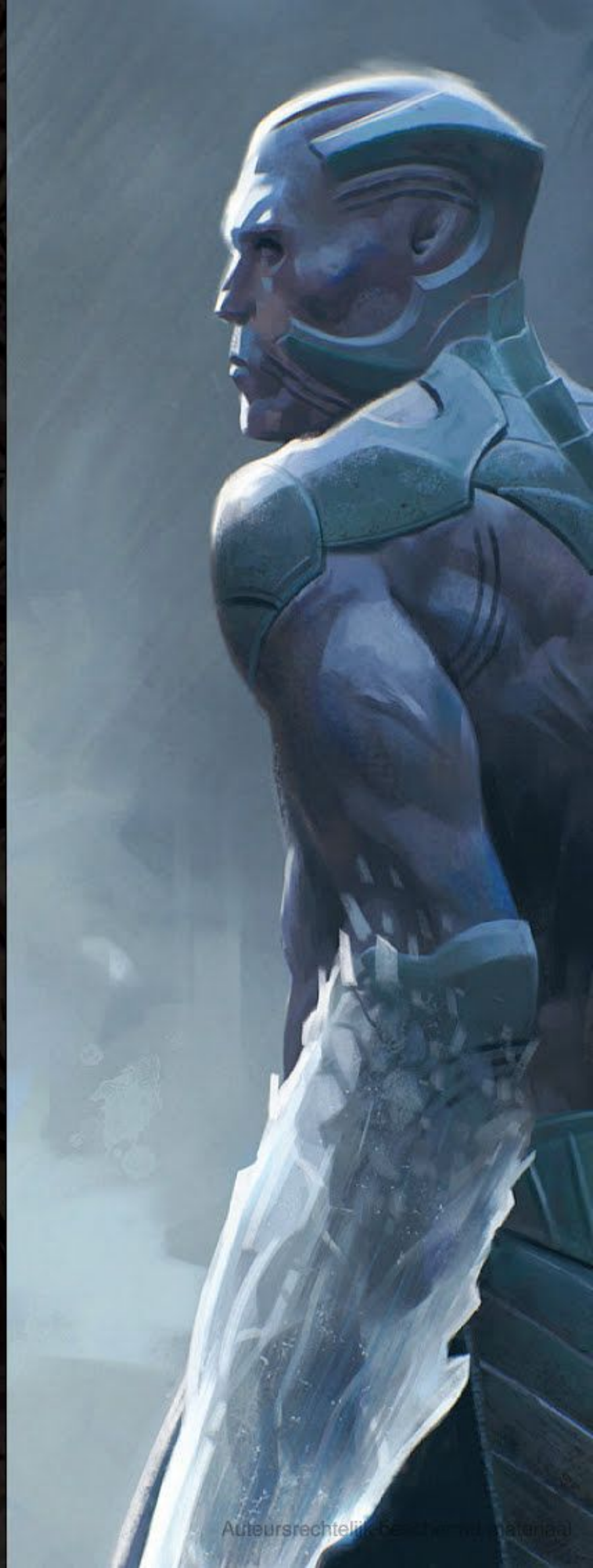
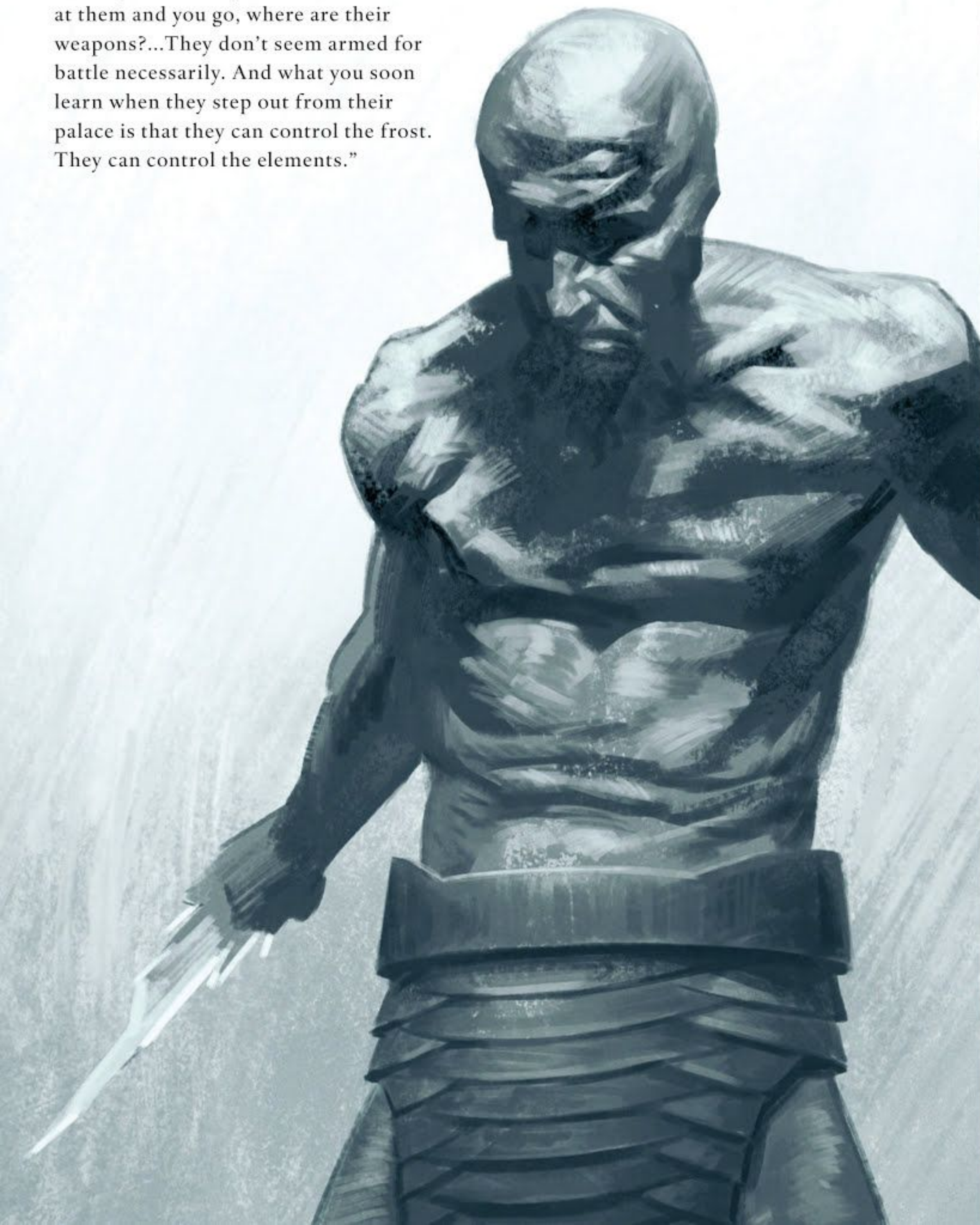
Concept art by Digital Domain.

Concept art by Michael Kutsche.

SEPTEMBER 25



Said Feige, "They've got the tattooing that indicates rank. They've got various armor pieces. And you start to look at them and you go, where are their weapons?...They don't seem armed for battle necessarily. And what you soon learn when they step out from their palace is that they can control the frost. They can control the elements."



CHAPTER FOUR : BRAVE NEW WORLDS



Although the Frost Giants in the film use mostly ice weapons formed right on their bodies, handheld weapons were designed by the art department and created by the prop team.





LAUFY

Hailing from the frozen world known as Jotunheim, the vile character of Laufey had only made a few appearances in the comics, which gave the designers more of a clean slate than most of the film's other characters. In fact, the design crew modeled most of the character's look after the actor playing him, Colm Feore — a decision that surprised even Feore. "[They said] we're gonna use your structure... You won't not recognize yourself in the mirror, but [we] will be taking you, just stretching out some of these... qualities," Feore said.

Concept art by Michael Kutsche.



Auteursrechtelijk beschermd materiaal



While only spending three days on set, Feore still had to endure long hours in the makeup chair. His day started with three men “wrestling” him into his main suit. Next, his face was painted, and false prosthetics and a bald cap were attached. Appliances for his hands and feet were put in place and glued on, and his nails were painted. When everything was zipped together and vacuum-sealed, Laufey’s fake teeth and contacts were applied. The lengthy process required Feore to arrive on set about six or seven hours before filming began.

Concept art by Michael Kutsche.

Alle rechten voorbehouden. Het verspreiden van deze afbeelding is strafbaar.





Behind-the-scenes stills by Legacy Effects.



THE FROST CREATURE

Jotunheim was granted its own single-headed equivalent of the hellhound Cerberus with the introduction of the Frost Creature, lapdog of Laufey. Given the same treatment as any other character in the film, the Frost Creature was subjected to many redesigns before the filmmakers decided on

the finished version. A feat of CGI engineering, the Frost Creature remains a terrifying example of what can evolve from the daunting living conditions of Jotunheim's isolated and barren wastelands. A challenge even to the mighty Thor, the Frost Creature is truly a beast to be feared.





CHAPTER FIVE:

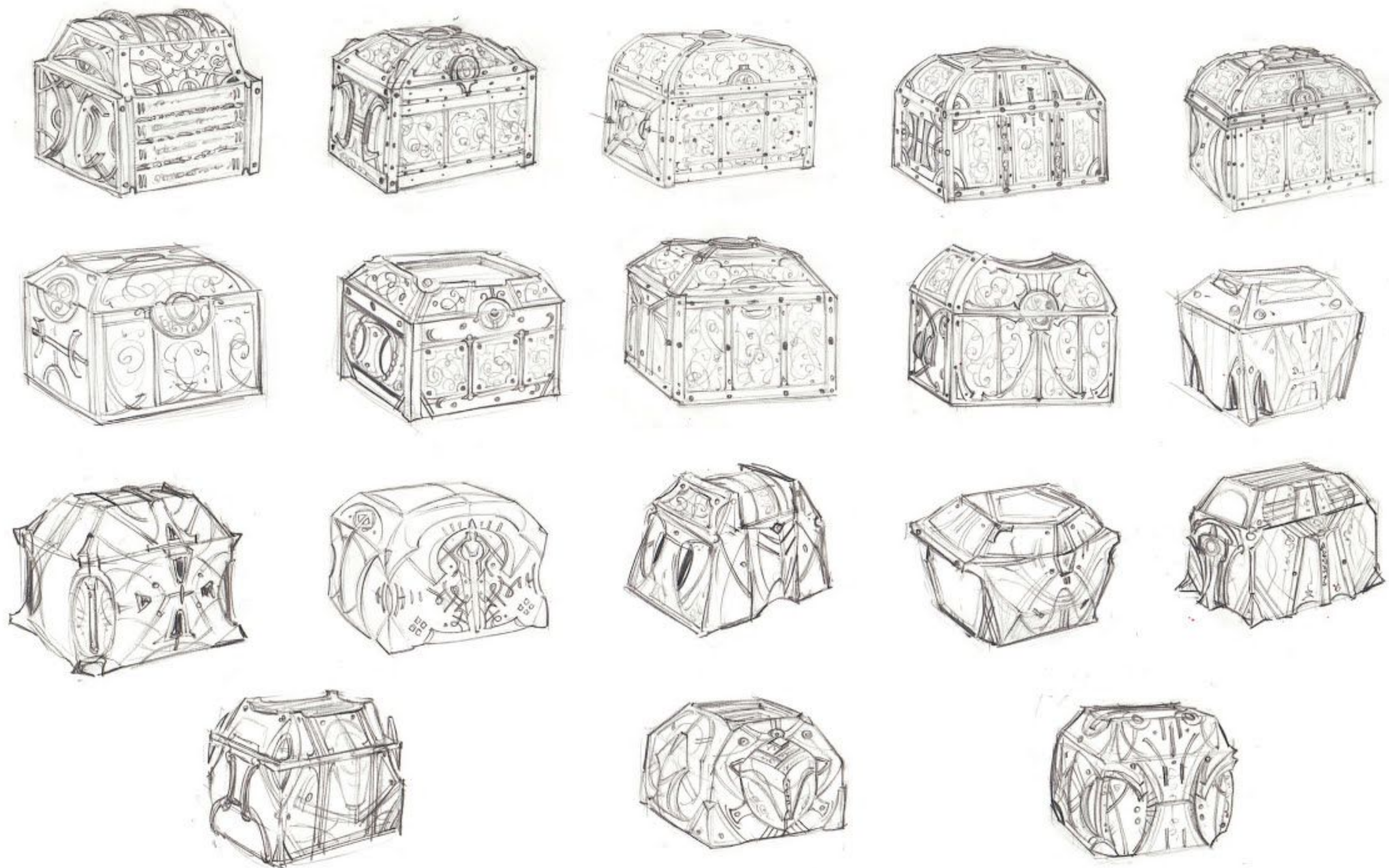
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

If the idea holds that a warrior is only as good as his weapon, Thor and company have very little to worry about. From the contents of Odin's prized vault in Asgard to the armor on the steeds the Warriors Three ride into battle, Property Master Russell Bobbitt and the rest of the design team on Thor meticulously pored over every detail of each of the otherworldly devices employed in the film.

Aided by CGI when necessary, Bobbitt, his crew and the concept designers were responsible for a small arsenal of weaponry — but their particular brand of magic wasn't limited merely to weapons of destruction. They also had a hand in crafting other props used in the film, including a detailed book on Norse mythology that became a major plot point in the story. "I found this wonderful illustrator in Sweden actually," Bobbitt said. "Our goal was to sort of do a children's book with illustrations. We obviously did our research with all the text and so on and so forth, and we created many, many pages of illustrations that sort of tell the story of our whole movie, starting with the Bifrost and getting into Yggdrasil and our characters."



CASKET OF ANCIENT WINTERS



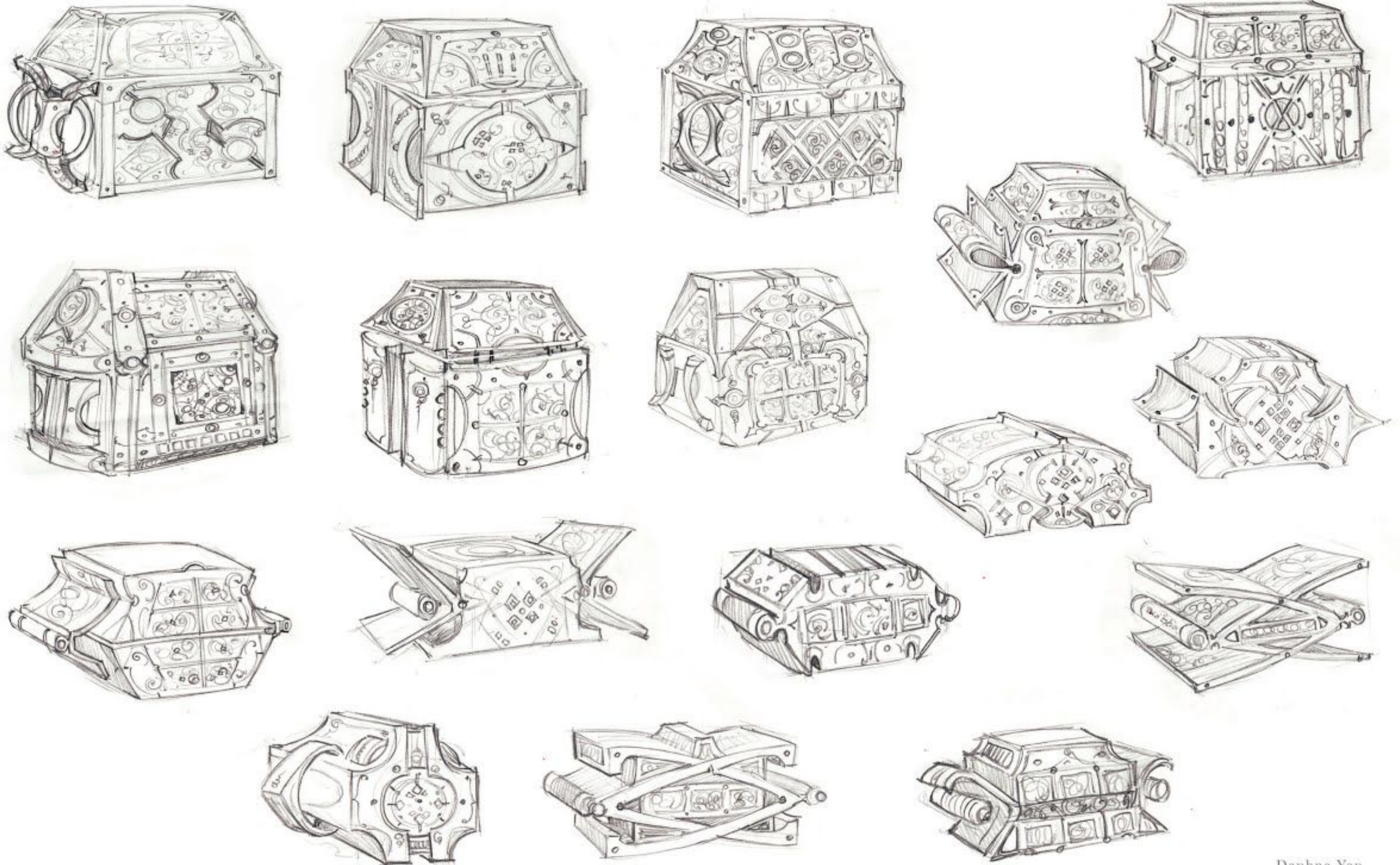
Daphne Yap

Another major plot point in the film, the Casket of Ancient Winters was an important device made famous in Thor comic books during writer/artist Walter Simonson's fabled "Surtur Saga." Tasked with bringing this memorable mystic artifact to life, Russell Bobbitt and his crew researched the designs of real life ancient caskets and went through dozens of visual possibilities before settling on the finished piece.

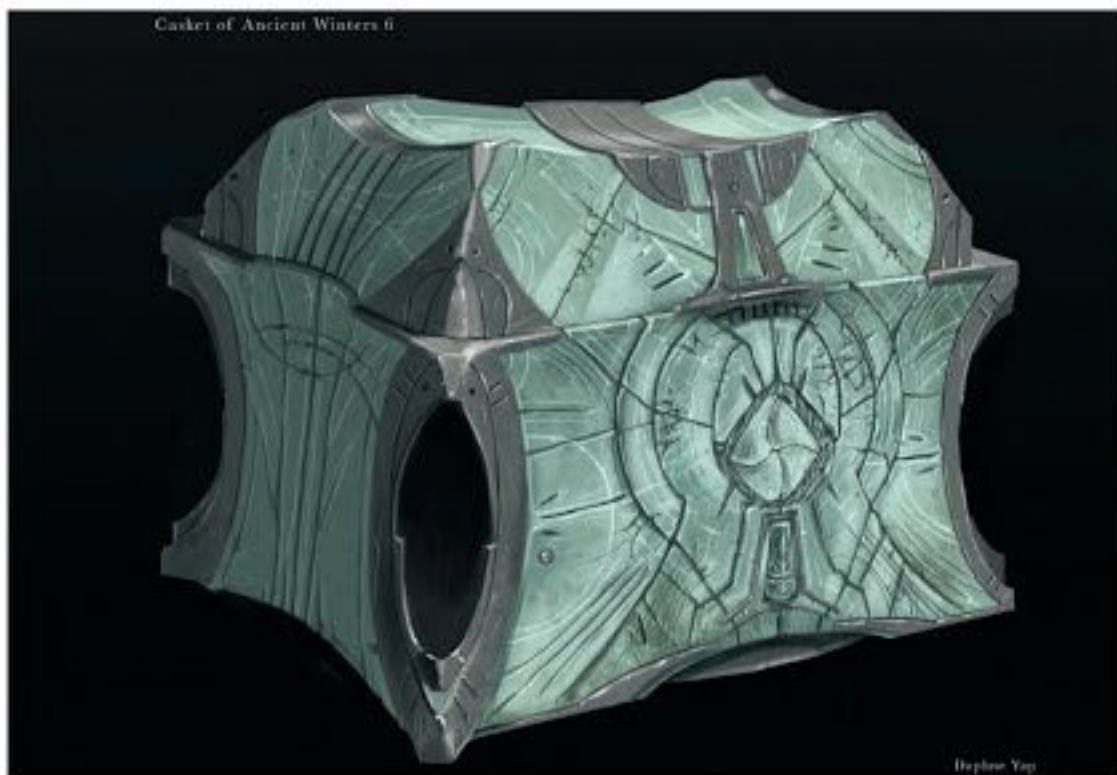


Daphne Yap

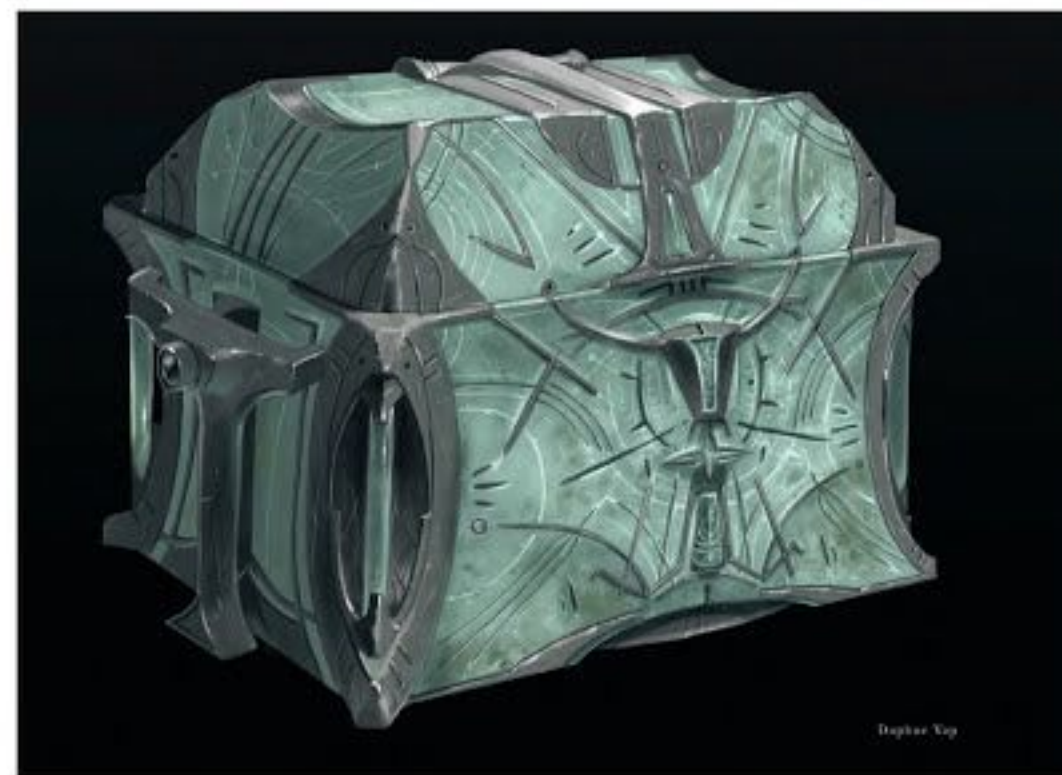




Daphne Yap



Daphne Yap



Daphne Yap

Bobbitt went the extra mile to bring the casket to life. "I took it a step further and thought... well it should light up. Why not? We have that technology," said Bobbitt, who was able to incorporate a remote-controlled dimmer switch to activate a glow from within the prop without the aid of wires of any kind.

ASGARD : WEAPONS VAULT

A heavily guarded chamber at the center of Asgard's palace, the Weapon's Vault is home to many of Odin's exotic valuables. Said Co-Producer Craig Kyle, "[Odin] captured and stole and purchased and did whatever he could to take all the relics and weapons that could bring about Ragnarok [the Asgardian end times], and he locked them away in a vault in the base of his palace, so anything he thought could bring the universe down is now under lock and key."



Home to the incredibly powerful Casket of Ancient Winters, Odin's Vault has always been a prime target for those seeking powerful weapons of destruction. Near the start of the film, the Vault is attacked by trespassers from the realm of Jotunheim. However, the intruders failed to take into consideration what is perhaps the Vault's deadliest device: the unmanned, hulking automaton known as the Destroyer.





Fans of the comics may not only recognize the Casket of Ancient Winters, but also other noteworthy Marvel artifacts such as the Eternal Flame, the Warlock Eye and the Infinity Gauntlet.



Production still.



Production still.



CHAPTER FIVE : TOOLS OF THE TRADE



DESTROYER

More of a character than a mere weapon, the Destroyer also has its roots in the Thor comic books. Director Kenneth Branagh described the mechanical monstrosity as “a suit of armor apparently empty but embodied by the person who is in control of it temporarily. It’s a soulless piece of violent, destructive, wreckage-making power, and it’s a creature that will make a huge and powerful appearance in our film.”







A physical threat great enough to challenge even a god with the power to summon the lightning and storm, the Destroyer starred in one of the greatest conflicts in the film. Said Kevin Feige, "The most frightening thing about it is this giant energy beam it has that emanates from its head and shoots out 100,000 times more powerful than Iron Man's repulsor rays."

Concept art by
E.J. Krisor.

Advanced armor made of thermally resistant material

Although mostly a creation of CGI, a life-size Destroyer model was created for production. According to Chris Hemsworth, "There was one physical 10-foot Destroyer which I think was a lot of the time a reference for eye lines and to keep the perspective for what they were shooting." That physical presence heightened the reality for the actors and made the climactic scene feel all the more legitimate.



Concept art by Tully Summers.



Auteursrechtelijk beschermd materiaal





Behind-the-scenes stills by Legacy Effects.



Auteursrechtelijk beschermd materiaal

HORSES

Outfitted with fanciful armor and other adornments, the Asgardians' horses — including Odin's impressive eight-legged steed, Sleipnir — were as painstakingly thought out as any of the film's other characters. But behind the scenes, the real challenge fell to the actors rather than the art department. With limited time to train, the performers embarked on their horseback-riding duties with only the bare minimum of experience. Said Second Unit Director Vic Armstrong, "Everybody did a fantastic job, absolutely fabulous. I had stunt doubles there, but I did it with the actors and they all stepped up to the plate and did a sterling job."

Concept art by Michael Kutsche.



Concept art by
Daphne Yap.

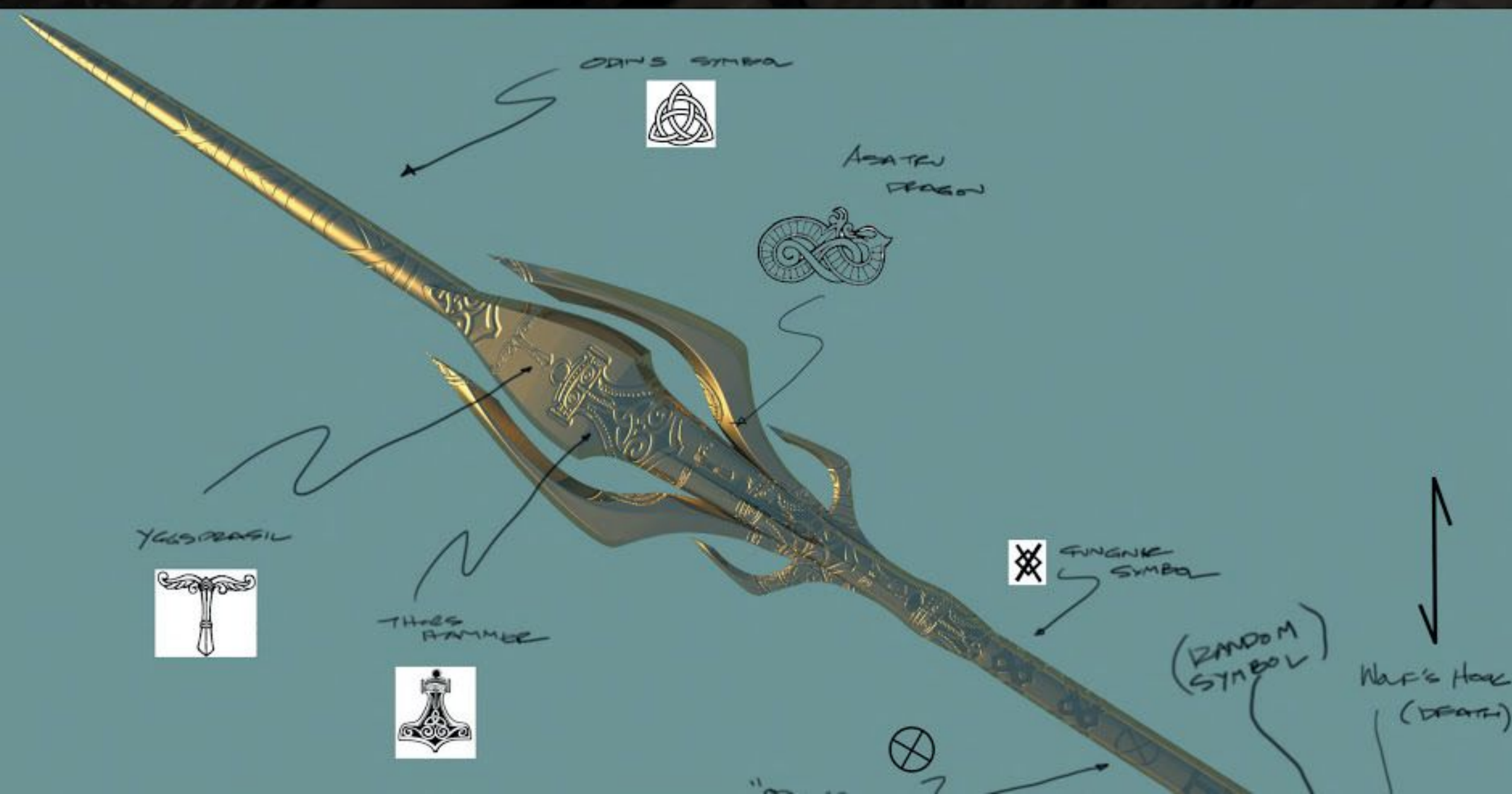
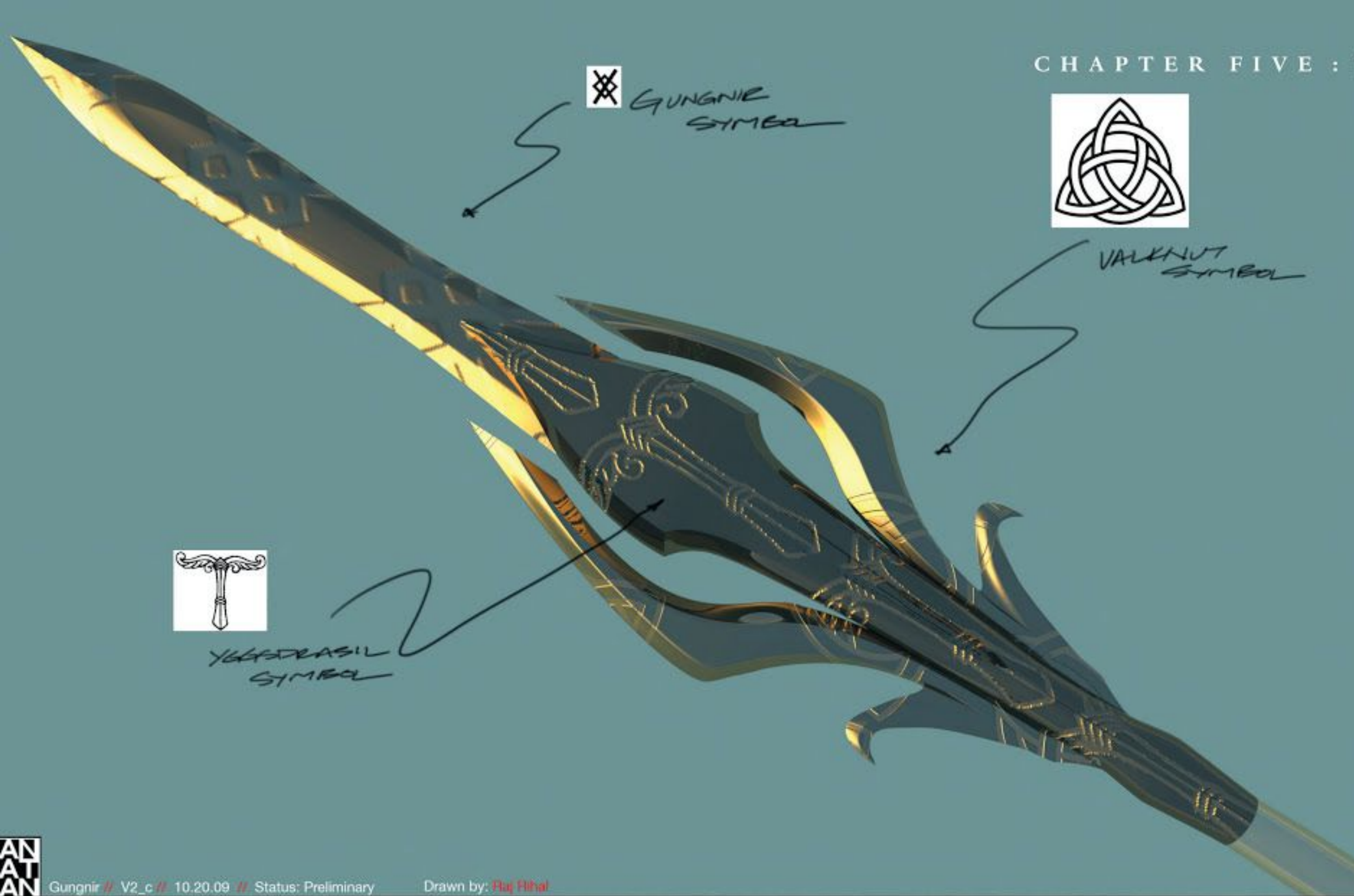


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GUNGNIR

For Odin All-father's weapon of choice, Russell Bobbitt again went back and forth with the design. "How can this be carried? How long does it need to be? What's involved in the design?" were just some of the questions Bobbitt asked himself. In the end, the design crew developed a 30-pound spear Sir Anthony Hopkins carried as often as possible, preferring the weight of the actualized version over the lighter stunt version also developed.



SIF'S SWORD AND SHIELD

Bobbitt and his team had a hard time developing a proper shield to match the comparatively small frame of actress Jaimie Alexander. The practical question of how Sif

would tote a large shield when not in battle plagued Bobbitt until he came up with a design that would fit snugly onto the character's back when not in use.



LOKI'S DAGGERS

With his trickster nature and tendency to not want to dirty his hands in battle, it was decided that Loki would employ throwing daggers for many of his

combat scenes. Combined with his capoeira-like fighting style, Loki's preferred weapons help to further establish how different he is from his brother, Thor.



CHAPTER SIX

CLOSER TO HOME





THOR ON EARTH

While trapped on Earth, Thor is forced to take on the guise of a normal, working-class mortal man, going by the well-known alias Donald Blake. Said Director Kenneth Branagh, "Donald Blake in the comics [is] sometimes the alter ego of Thor on Earth...He has a limp, he has a cane. A cane that when banged on the ground becomes the hammer...[and] transforms him into Thor. We will not pursue the Donald Blake character in quite the way people imagine. That doesn't mean that won't happen at sometime in the future."



Concept art by Constantine Serkeris.



Concept art by Charlie Wen.



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JANE FOSTER

Thor's original love interest from the comics, Jane Foster's role was adapted by the filmmakers to fit the storyline and the modern sensibilities of the actress who portrayed her, Natalie Portman. Instead of her comic-book role as a nurse, Jane was given a new career path. According to Kevin Feige, "She is a scientist, an astrophysicist. Someone who watches the heavens and tries to understand the way in which interdimensional travel is possible."

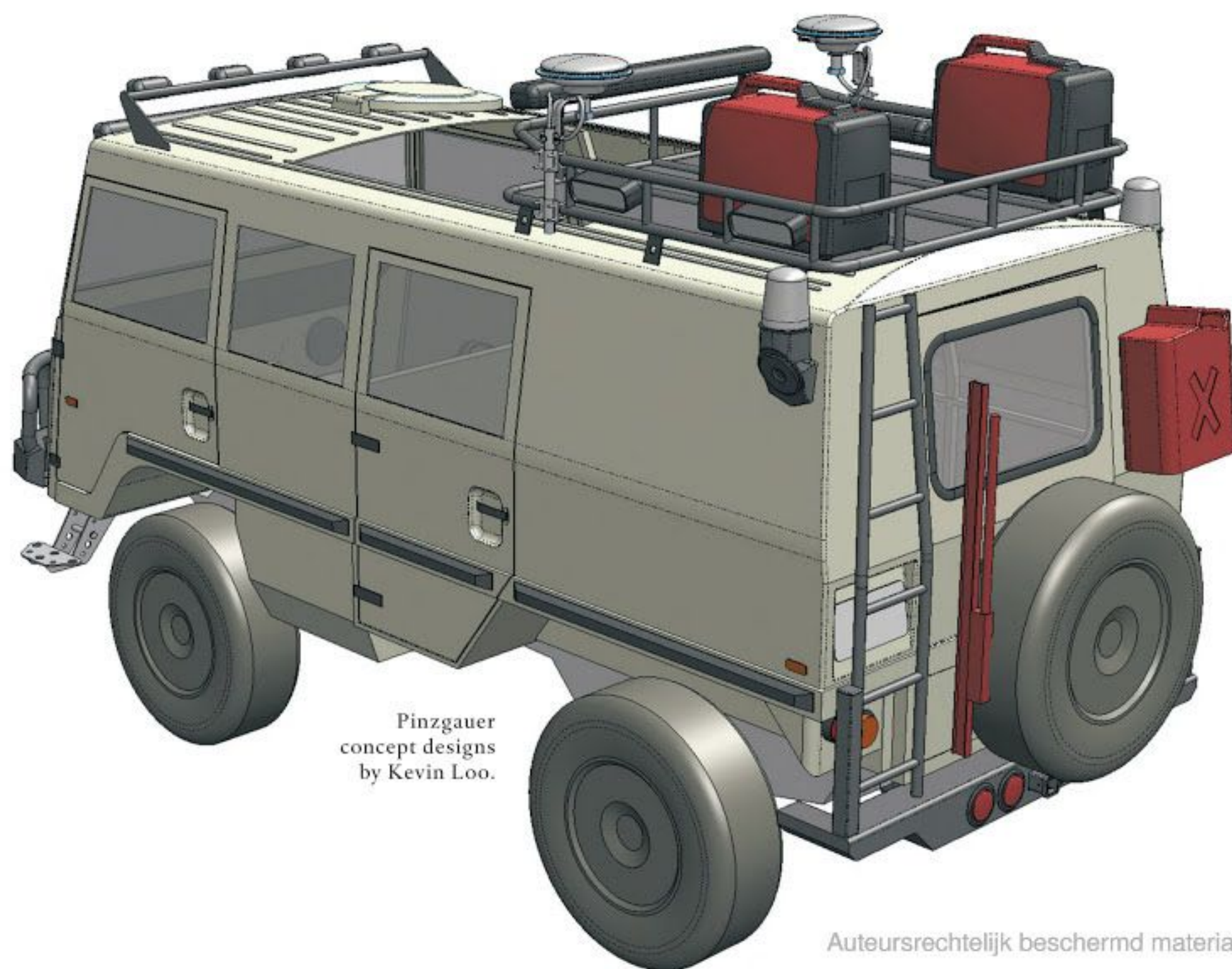
And when clothing Portman, Costume Designer Alexandra Byrne decided to help blend Portman's femininity with her ambitious nature. "We felt that she should be very natural, but not the cliché," Byrne said. "We wanted her to be younger and freer, a little bit more eccentric and an opposite to Sif."







Instrumental in Jane Foster's research and study of weather phenomena is a peculiar mobile lab. Not surprisingly, the vehicle's cluttered design reflected Foster's own life, an almost oxymoronic blend of chaos and organization.



Pinzgauer
concept designs
by Kevin Loo.



SMITH MOTORS

Jane Foster's base of operations, her makeshift lab at Smith Motors, was a key location in the film. While sophisticated inside, the building's exterior represented the kind of "Hopperish Americana" that both Director Kenneth Branagh and Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos were trying to achieve.











Dry Creek Street, concept art by Raj Rihal.

Interesting landmark buildings like Smith Motors only added to the realistic feel of small-town America. “Most super hero films are set in New York or at least wind up there,” Screenwriter Don Payne said. “I think it’s very cool that this story is set in a small town. I haven’t seen that really in a super hero film. We kind of get to know this town, it becomes a character.”



Production still.



Production still.



Auteursrechtelijk beschermd materiaal

CHAPTER SIX : CLOSER TO HOME

Said Payne, “We get to know the people in the town, along with Thor and when things start to go wrong in the town, when danger comes to it, I think you feel connected to it, I think you feel it more viscerally and emotionally than you would if super heroes are throwing around buses in New York City because you care about this town, you care about these people.”

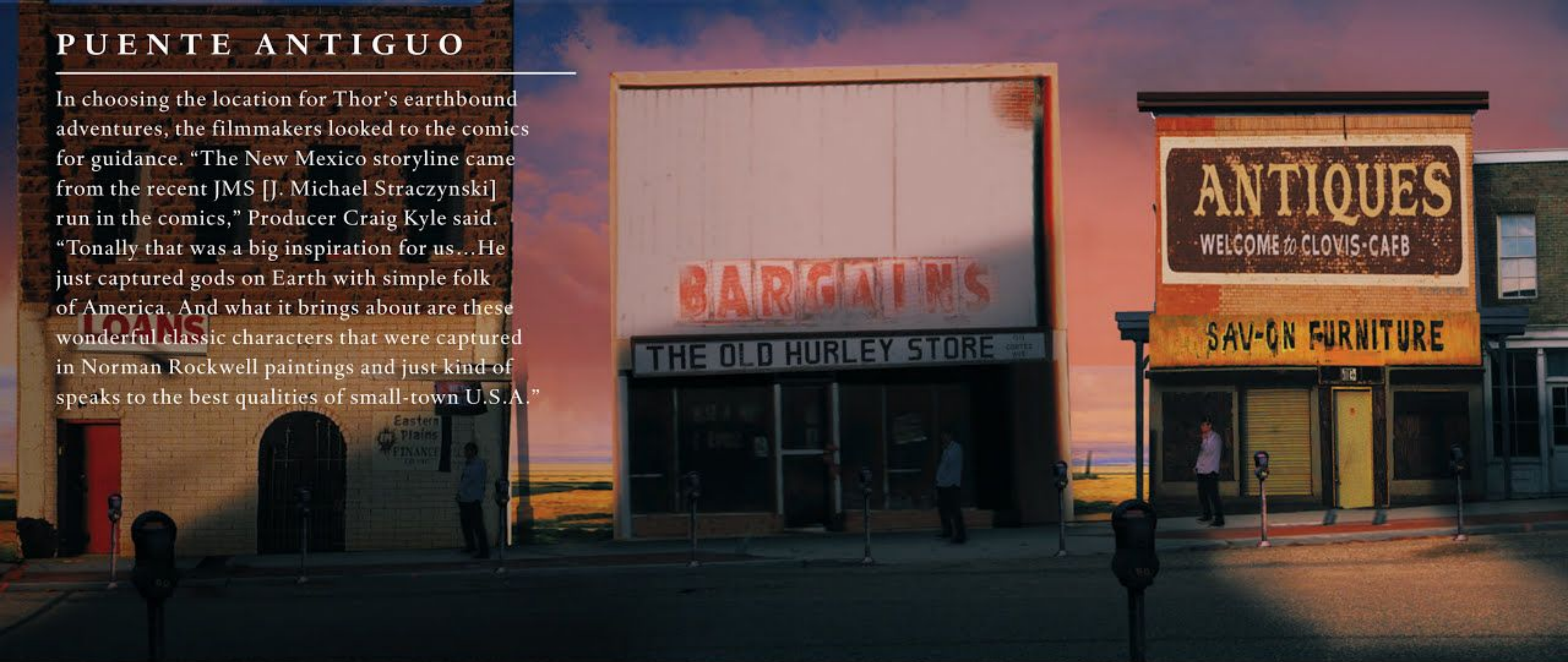






PUENTE ANTIGUO

In choosing the location for Thor's earthbound adventures, the filmmakers looked to the comics for guidance. "The New Mexico storyline came from the recent JMS [J. Michael Straczynski] run in the comics," Producer Craig Kyle said. "Tonally that was a big inspiration for us...He just captured gods on Earth with simple folk of America. And what it brings about are these wonderful classic characters that were captured in Norman Rockwell paintings and just kind of speaks to the best qualities of small-town U.S.A."



Concept art by Kasra Farahani.





Concept art by Raj Rihal.



Concept art by Raj Rihal.



Concept art by Raj Rihal.

When building the town of Puente Antiguo, Production Designer Bo Welch and his design team were careful to make the set as authentic as possible. “They took an Old West town that was used in *Silverado* and in *3:10 to Yuma* and transformed it into a modern little town in middle America,” Kyle said. “Kevin [Feige] wanted to ensure that it didn’t look like Thor had landed on a movie lot when he touched down on Earth. The finished location is completely contemporary, while maintaining the high noon vibe captured in the original town.”





Welch's design skills soon eased any concerns, and Thor's Midgard environment proved as detailed and authentic as his Asgardian home. Said Welch, "After you've designed Asgard, Jotunheim, the Rainbow Bridge, [etc.]...at that point Earth is like a holiday in terms of design. Nevertheless, it still has to fit into a cohesive universe within the film."













Production still.



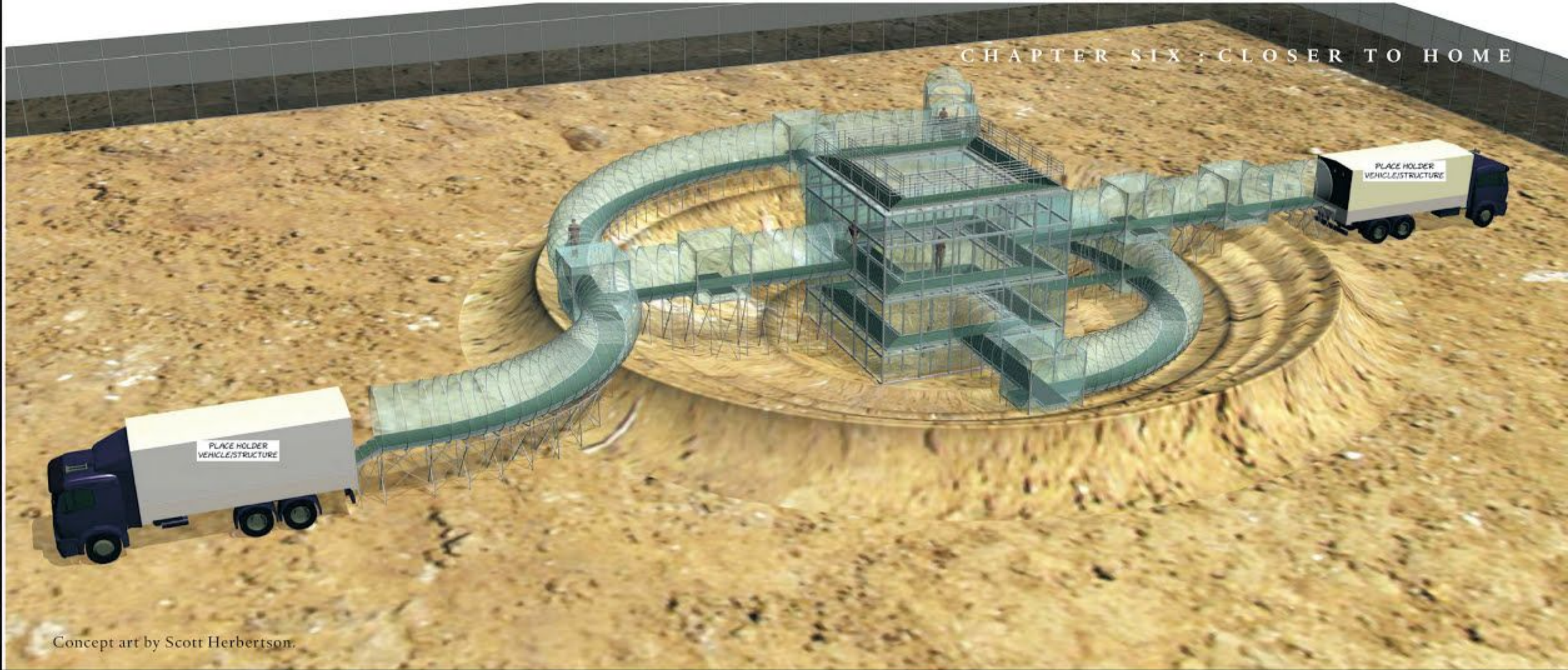
CHAPTER SIX : CLOSER TO HOME

While Bo Welch and the rest of the art team made the town as perfect as possible, nature had its own opinion on the matter. According to Executive Producer Patricia Whitcher, “We used to tease each other...well that’s what Thor does, he plays around with the elements so he’s in this mood today or he’s in that mood today, but we experienced everything.

From 75-degree, beautiful mornings that could turn in the same day to 50-mile-per-hour winds, sandstorms, hail, rain, lightning, [or] snow...We just kind of battled our way through it.” The results were set clean-ups that rivaled the destruction wrought on the town later in the film by the Destroyer.

Concept art by E.J. Krisor.





Concept art by Scott Herbertson.



Production still.



Production still.
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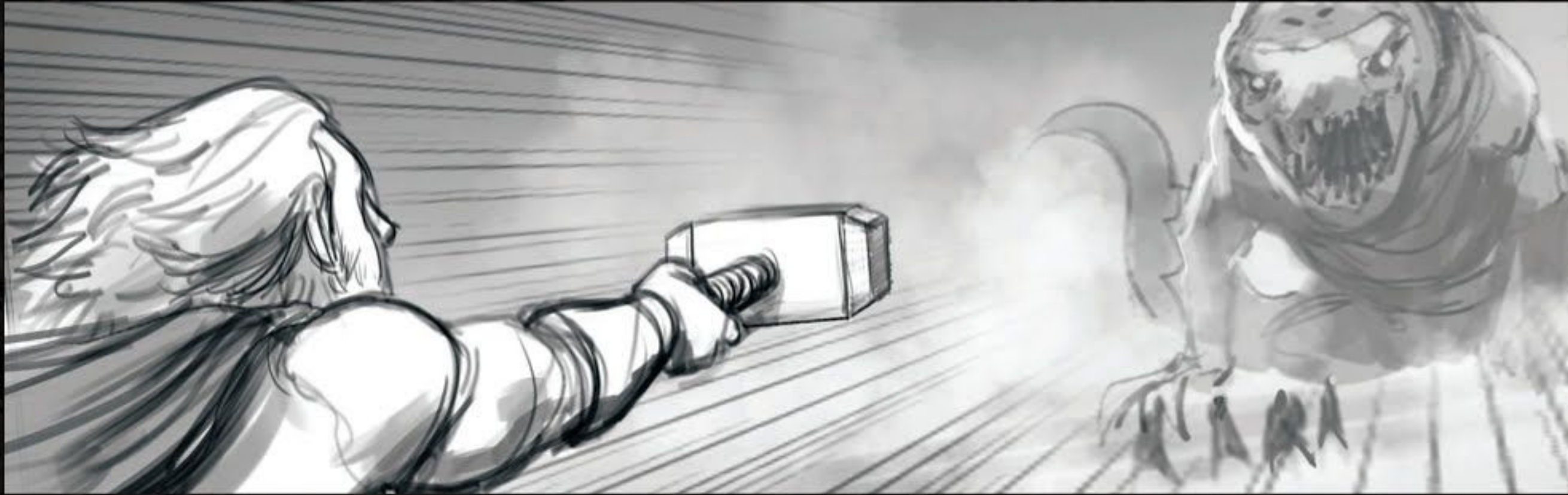
Forced to navigate Jotunheim's harsh, frozen terrain at a quicker pace than they'd like, the Warriors Three and Sif seem to be at the end of their rope. As evident in these storyboards, conveying the action in a clear and distinct manner is the artist's primary goal.



CHAPTER SEVEN : BRINGING THE THUNDER



Artist Federico D'Alessandro expertly crafted the storyboards for this sequence, also animating his drawings to arrive at the finished animatic.



In this sequence, Thor makes his dramatic entrance, as the character is known to do. And as it turns out, despite the Frost Creature's enormous size and stature, the ferocious beast is no match for an angry Thunder God and his trusty hammer, Mjolnir.



CHAPTER SEVEN : BRINGING THE THUNDER

With this strong foundation to build on, the CGI department was able to realize this scene in fully rendered computer animation, with the cast acting out their parts in front of a mix of green-screen backdrops and practical scenery built by Production Designer Bo Welch and his team of artists.







Deciding what image would be used to capture the interest of millions of moviegoers is a process not taken lightly by the marketing team. "There can be hundreds and hundreds of mockups of a poster before you land on the image that works perfectly and can sort of encapsulate the experience of the movie on a two-dimensional one-sheet poster," Feige said.







MARVEL STUDIOS

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For Thor, the true challenge was finding a composition that spoke to the film's themes. The filmmakers wanted to show the hero in all his impressive glory, but also hint at Thor's nature as a man torn between two worlds who journeys to three. It was a difficult message to convey, and one that needed to be touched on rather subtly.



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CHAPTER EIGHT : THE LEGEND DEBUTS

TWO WORLDS.
ONE HERO.

MARVEL STUDIOS
THOR

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CHAPTER EIGHT : THE LEGEND DEBUTS

Just as important as any one-sheet found in a movie theater, Paramount and Marvel also worked on an extensive outdoor campaign — including bus-shelter posters, billboards and large images applied directly to the sides of buildings — each advertisement consisting of different dimensions and requiring a unique composition from the art department. And in some cases, the public seemed to have a way of letting the marketing staff know their work was appreciated. Said Feige, “Oftentimes a good sign of a good bus shelter poster is that people steal it.”

With its strong marketing campaign and eager fan base, it seemed Thor was already one of the most highly anticipated films in Marvel’s history even a year before its debut in theaters.



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige has guided the studio through more than a decade of films and was instrumental in starting up the current era of movies produced directly by the studio (rather than by a production partner). Feige serves as producer for the studio's entire slate of films — including *Iron Man*, *Iron Man 2*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Thor*, and the upcoming *Captain America: The First Avenger* and *The Avengers*. In that role, it falls to him to coordinate the emergent Marvel Cinematic Universe between the different productions — drawing together a talented pool of directors, producers, actors and artists to create a coherent film world, the likes of which Hollywood has never attempted.

Kenneth Branagh is a celebrated actor and director whose first film, *Henry V*, earned him Academy Award nominations for both Best Director and Best Actor, and launched a career in cinema that has embraced performances in films as diverse as *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Robert Altman's *Gingerbread Man*, Woody Allen's *Celebrity* and Bryan Singer's *Valkyrie*. He has directed an impressive and varied list of films that include *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* starring Robert De Niro, *Sleuth* starring Michael Caine and Jude Law, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, and an epic film version of Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*. His work in film and television has brought him Academy Award, Golden Globe and Emmy nominations.

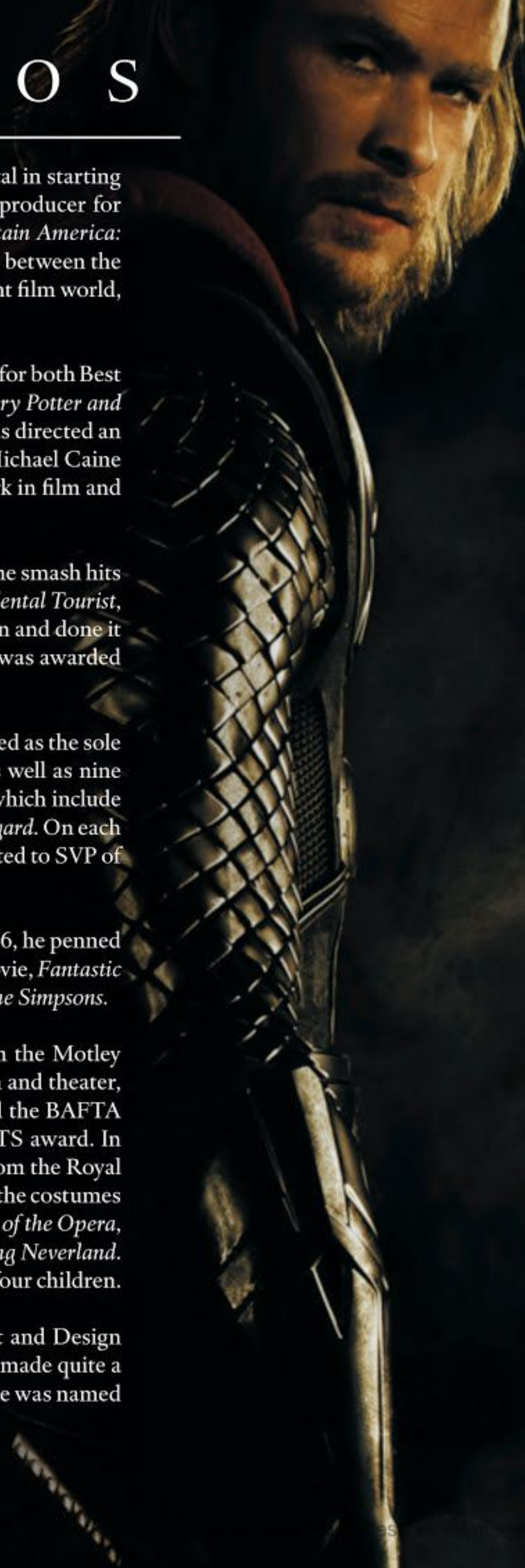
For Production Designer Bo Welch, working on a giant blockbuster like *Thor* was just another day at the office. From the smash hits *Beetlejuice*, *Batman Returns*, *Ghostbusters II* and the *Men in Black* series to critically acclaimed films such as *The Accidental Tourist*, *Grand Canyon* and *The Birdcage* to cult favorites like *Joe Versus the Volcano* and *The Lost Boys*, Welch has seemingly seen and done it all, including serving as art director on the acclaimed film *The Color Purple*. Welch is a four-time Oscar nominee and was awarded the BAFTA Best Production Design Film award for his groundbreaking work on *Edward Scissorhands*.

Thor Co-Producer Craig Kyle began his career at Marvel Studios as an animation consultant in 2000, but was soon hired as the sole creative executive for the company's animation division. He has developed two live-action projects for television, as well as nine animated series. Craig also oversaw the development and production of Marvel's animated direct-to-DVD projects, which include *Ultimate Avengers: The Movie*, *Ultimate Avengers II*, *Iron Man*, *Hulk VS*, *Doctor Strange*, *Planet Hulk* and *Thor: Tales of Asgard*. On each direct-to-DVD film, Craig was the supervising producer and co-writer of the story. Three years ago, Craig was promoted to SVP of production and development of Marvel Studios' live-action division.

Screenwriter Don Payne has had several brushes with the super-hero genre in his writing and producing career. In 2006, he penned the screenplay for *My Super Ex-Girlfriend*, only to follow that film with writing the sequel to Marvel's *Fantastic Four* movie, *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*. He's also an Emmy-winning writer and producer for Fox's smash-hit animated sitcom *The Simpsons*.

In the late 1970s, Alexandra Byrne trained as an architect at Bristol University before studying Theatre Design on the Motley Course at the English National Opera under the legendary Margaret Harris. She has worked extensively in television and theater, both as a set and costume designer. Her television credits include Roger Michell's *Persuasion*, for which she received the BAFTA Award for Best Costume Design, and *The Buddha of Suburbia*, for which she received a BAFTA nomination and RTS award. In theater, Alexandra received a Tony nomination for Best Set Design for *Some Americans Abroad*, which transferred from the Royal Shakespeare Company to the Lincoln Center in New York. Following on from her work in theater, Alexandra designed the costumes for Kenneth Branagh's film of *Hamlet*, for which she gained her first Oscar nomination. Other credits include *Phantom of the Opera*, *Sleuth* and *The Garden of Eden*. She received two further Oscar nominations for her costumes for *Elizabeth* and *Finding Neverland*. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* finally won her the Oscar. Alexandra is married to the actor Simon Shepherd, and they have four children.

Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos, BSC, acquired a BA in Fine Arts from Central St. Martin's College of Art and Design before going on to receive his MFA in Cinematography from the American Film Institute in 1997. Since then, he has made quite a name for himself, working on a wide variety of films including *Venus*, *Sleuth*, *Mama Mia!* and *The Other Man*. In 2006, he was named one of *Variety*'s "10 Cinematographers to Watch."



Property Master Russell Bobbitt's resume includes such diverse films as *Iron Man* and *Iron Man 2*, *Star Trek*, *Starsky & Hutch*, *What About Bob?*, *The Sum of All Fears*, *Never Been Kissed*, *The Hangover*, and the upcoming films *Cowboys and Aliens* and *The Hangover 2*. Tasked with the acquisition and maintenance of film props and set pieces, as well as the establishment of prop continuity from scene to scene, Bobbitt has been developing the physical reality of movies for nearly 30 years. In 2008, Bobbitt was presented the prestigious Behind the Scenes Award for Best Property Master. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Tracy, daughter, Jordan, and son, Travis.

Charlie Wen has held a variety of positions in the entertainment industry, ranging from concept designer to art director, on everything from feature films to video games and commercials. Wen's client list reads as a virtual who's who of the industry, including Digital Domain, Disney, Dreamworks, Legendary Pictures, Marvel Studios, Darkhorse, Rhythm and Hues, Imagi Studios, Wizards of the Coast, and Sony Computer Entertainment of America. In 2005, he created Kratos and helped establish *God of War* as a monolithic action adventure title for Sony PlayStation. Outside of the production environment, Charlie has given lectures on figure drawing and character design at many distinguished studios and universities. After helping to establish the main character designs in *Thor*, he holds the title of co-visual development supervisor at Marvel Studios, working on the upcoming films *Captain America: The First Avenger* and *The Avengers*.

Ryan Meinerding has only been a freelance concept artist and illustrator in the film business since 2005, but his work is already drawing the kind of raves reserved for veterans of the industry. After collecting a degree in industrial design from Notre Dame, he eventually transitioned to Hollywood and worked on *Outlander*. Subsequent to *Iron Man*, he worked on *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* and helped coordinate wardrobe for *Watchmen*. While working on *Iron Man 2*, Meinerding contributed the design for the new Iron Man armor in the comic-book series *Invincible Iron Man*, continuing to cement the strong bonds between Marvel Studios and Marvel Comics. He was part of the *Iron Man* crew nominated for the 2009 Art Directors Guild Excellence in Production Design Award for Fantasy Films, and also served as visual development co-supervisor on the upcoming *Captain America: The First Avenger* and *The Avengers* films.

Executive producer of *Thor*, Patricia Whitcher has quite a storied career to call her own. From working as a production coordinator on the fondly remembered *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* to serving as one of the unit production managers on *True Lies* to working as executive producer on *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *The Terminal*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Dreamgirls* and *The Soloist*, Whitcher has worked her way up to the top and is sure to keep climbing, if her role as executive producer on 2012's surefire blockbuster *The Avengers* is any indication.

First Assistant Director Luc Etienne started out in the movie business as an actor in France, being cast in films such as *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. He has since formed a well-respected career as an assistant director, working on such films as *Ronin*, *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *Eight Below*, *Wanted*, *The Losers* and most recently *I Am Number Four*.

Second Unit Director Vic Armstrong has done stunt work for some of the most impressive action movies in film history. With a resume including James Bond hits like *You Only Live Twice* and *Live and Let Die* to classic adventure films like the original *Indiana Jones* trilogy, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and *Total Recall* to comic-book films including *Superman*, *Conan the Destroyer* and *Blade: Trinity*, Armstrong holds the title of The World's Most Prolific Stuntman, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Brother of Vic Armstrong and another true veteran of the industry, Stunt Coordinator Andy Armstrong has had a hand in more than 150 various TV or film projects in more than 40 countries, beginning in the mid-1970s. Starting out with jobs like his role as second assistant director in *Ragtime* and third assistant director on *Barry Lyndon*, Armstrong worked his way up the ladder including stints as a first assistant director on *The Dresser* and *Hope and Glory*, both of which were nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. He also served as second unit director on *Double Impact*, *I, Robot*, and Tim Burton's *Planet of the Apes*. He wrote, directed and produced the film *Moonshine Highway*. He soon began work as a stunt coordinator for films like *Hoffa*, *The Firm*, *Stargate*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Galaxy Quest* and *The Green Hornet*, and is working on the upcoming reboot of the Spider-Man franchise.

During the course of his professional career, Mike Zagari has illustrated and designed for DC Comics, Marvel Entertainment, Transformers, the Simpsons, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, G.I. Joe and several Nintendo properties. Most recently, as the DC Comics Online Art Director, he oversaw the digital design of Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and the rest of DC Comics library for both online and digital initiatives. Freelance designing and illustrating, Mike also self-publishes an ongoing comic called *Human on the Inside*.

No stranger to the world of Marvel Comics, Matthew K. Manning has written several books about some of the company's most iconic characters, including the DK titles *Wolverine: Inside the World of the Living Weapon* and *Iron Man: The Ultimate Guide to the Armored Super Hero*. Also an avid comic-book writer, Manning has written for such titles as *Batman*, *Batman 80-Page Giant 2010*, *The Batman Strikes*, *Spider-Man Unlimited*, *Marvel Romance Redux*, *Legion of Super-Heroes in the 31st Century*, *Justice League Adventures*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Six Sea Shanties* and *Looney Tunes*, among others. Manning has finished work on a creator-owned DC Comics mini-series, as well as the hardcover book *Captain America: The Art of Captain America — The First Avenger*. He resides in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife Dorothy and their daughter Lillian.

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